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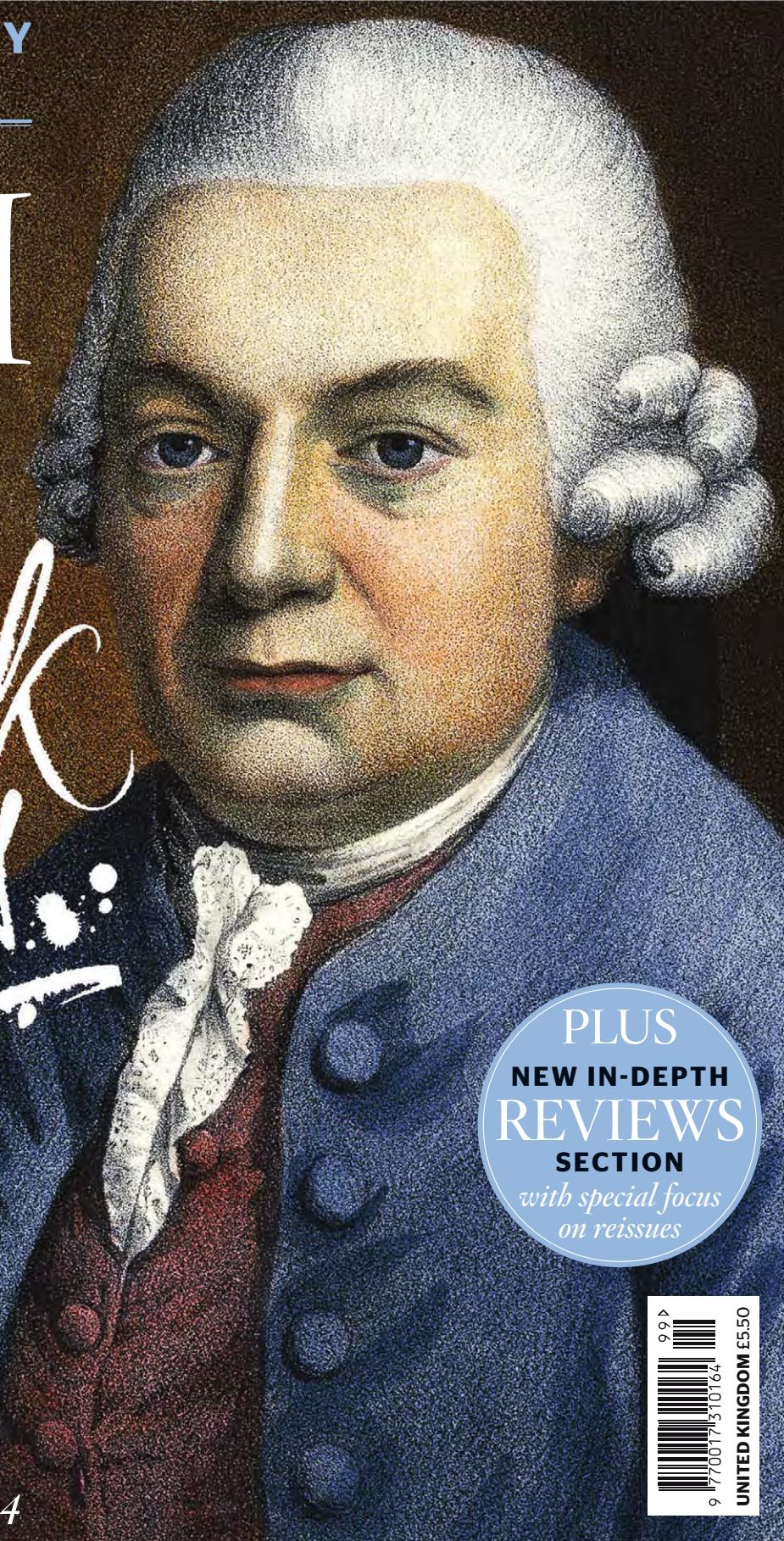
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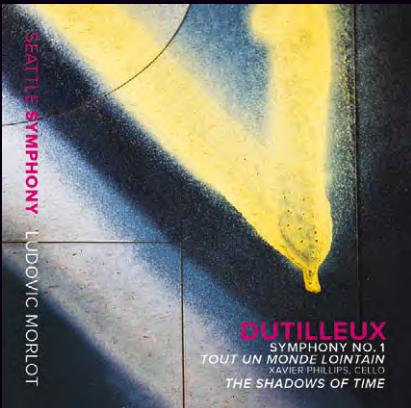
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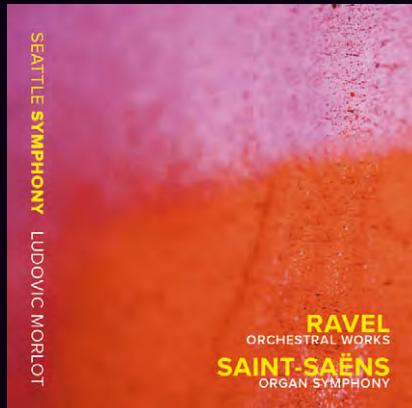
Three releases reflect the highly-acclaimed partnership between talented young French conductor Ludovic Morlot and his American orchestra. Recorded to audiophile standards in Seattle's acoustically superb Benaroya Hall.



DUTILLEUX

Symphony No. 1
Tout un monde lointain
Xavier Phillips, cello
The Shadows of Time

Drawing on Ludovic Morlot's personal relationship with the great French composer, this disc features virtuosic and sensuous performances of three major Dutilleux works, from the early Symphony No. 1 to the late masterpiece *The Shadows of Time*. Referring to Xavier Phillips' interpretation of *Tout un monde lointain*, the composer remarked, "[He] fully owns this work and evokes the very essence of its title - all a distant world."



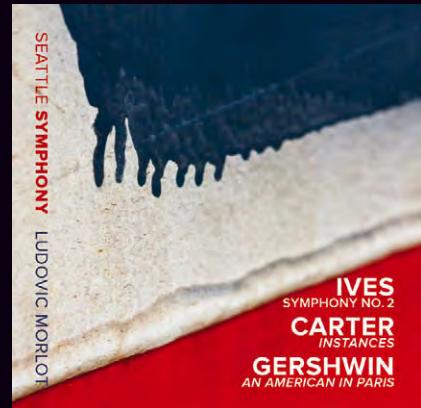
RAVEL

Alborada del gracioso
Pavane pour une infante défunte
Rapsodie espagnole

SAINT-SAËNS

Symphony No. 3 in C minor,
Op. 78, "Organ"

Recorded live in concert, this disc includes three of Ravel's best-loved orchestral works, as well as an electrifying performance of Saint-Saëns' "Organ" Symphony, featuring Benaroya Hall's magnificent 4,489-pipe Watjen Concert Organ - one of the finest concert organs in America.



IVES

Symphony No. 2

CARTER

Instances

GERSHWIN

An American in Paris

Two masterpieces of early 20th-century American music by Ives and Gershwin, reflecting eclectic influences of jazz club, church hall, military band and popular melody. And standing as a delicate counterpoint is a touching document of the world premiere performances of *Instances*, Elliott Carter's elegiac last orchestral work.



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GRAMOPHONE

SOUNDS OF AMERICA

RECORDINGS & EVENTS *A special eight-page section for readers in the US and Canada*

Bruch · Glière

'Eight Pieces'

Bruch Eight Pieces, Op 83^a

Glière Eight Pieces, Op 39^b

Miller-Porfiris Duo (Anton Miller vn Rita Porfiris va)

with ^cDavid Westfall pf

Mp2 Records M 700261 389752 (55' • DDD)



The number of movements in the works on this disc isn't the only thing that binds the repertoire. Both Reinhold Glière's Eight Pieces, Op 39, and Max Bruch's Eight Pieces, Op 83, are products of 1908-09 and each forgoes the musical language of its time to look back to the Romantic era or even further. Oh, and another thing: all of these pieces are performed in arrangements, underlining the fact that musicians – like violinist Anton Miller and viola player Rita Porfiris on their fine new recording – are always on the lookout for rewarding works, whatever the original scoring.

Russian composer Glière wrote his collection for violin and cello, with the latter's dark timbre often giving the music a decidedly melancholic tint. That said, Porfiris's version for the two higher instruments is also satisfying, especially when violin and viola lightly dance Glière's Bach-inspired Gavotte or sing with bountiful warmth in the Russian-tinted Canzonetta.

The violin is the new arrival in Bruch's Op 83, originally for clarinet, viola and piano (though the composer preferred an earlier version with harp instead of piano). There may be more differentiation with the clarinet in place but the expressive grace and finesse that Miller brings to the violin part more than compensates for any potential loss of character. He teams seamlessly in these poignant and urgent miniatures with Porfiris, whose sound is vibrant and focused, and pianist David Westfall, who manages Bruch's Brahmsian demands with equal degrees of poetry, richness and agility.

Donald Rosenberg

GRAMOPHONE talks to...

Olga Peretyatko

The fast-rising soprano on the bel canto style in the new century

There's a depth, a darkness in your middle and lower ranges that hints at the mezzo...

Actually, I used to be a mezzo-soprano, and that sound in the middle and low registers is my bonus – not every lyric coloratura soprano has it! But the voice keeps developing, and you have to have a strong and stable technique to cope with that – which I do, thanks to my teachers and to the continuous learning that stage work brings.

On the subject of 'stage work', how does performing a role in a production change your approach to its arias in recital?

You have more ideas, of course. Everything you've read and seen about the piece will be heard in your voice. That's why I try to read every possible thing about the opera and the epoch – and in the case of Bellini's *I puritani*, there is really quite a lot written about that piece and that time.



Can the plot for an opera such as *I puritani* still be relevant today?

It's not so easy for modern women to accept characters such as Elvira, because things have changed. Post-feminism, the conflict between 'must' and 'want' is a little complicated, as it was conceived in a world where men were in control. But there are many other relevant emotions and I try to bring a little of my own character to every role, to make it stronger and more interesting. And we shouldn't forget that the *bel canto* world – especially Rossini's – is quite abstract, not like Puccini, where it's already decided at what point you will cry. Rossini lets you decide.

Goode

Annbling^a. Circular Thoughts^b.

Clarinet Sonata^c. Ländler Land^d

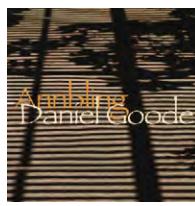
^bcDaniel Goode cl^dMichael Finckel, ^dAlexandra

MacKenzie, ^dPitnarry Shin vcs ^dSarah Cahill

^dJoseph Kubera, ^cDouglas Martin pfs

^aFlexible Orchestra / Tara Simoncic

New World F NW80744 (61' • DDD)



During the half-century of sturdy New York City homegrown brews the music on this CD spans, Daniel Goode's music has always been about instruments and, as an integral part of the process, rethinking the orchestra into a core classical music unit capped at 15 players. The results here are mostly engrossing.

Subtitled *Mahlerei: His Seventh comes to help Orleans* and scored for 10 trombones, two clarinets, viola, double bass, piano and percussion, *Annbling* ambles along mixing influences and outright quotations from Bach to Gershwin with riffs for piano, trumpet and, of course, trombones. It's third in a series of pieces written for his wife, and it's done so ingeniously, ingeniously and casually it might actually be New Orleans classical music – in a parallel universe.

Goode the renowned solo clarinettist takes centre stage in *Circular Thoughts*, remastered from a 1987 out-of-print cassette edition, a closely notated, 20-minute long improvisation which veers elegantly between focus and disorientation, warmed by an embedded Scottish tune. Written while Goode was at Columbia University, the early Clarinet Sonata gently confronts



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"Vladimir Lande and the St Petersburg State Symphony Orchestra negotiate the considerable technical demands of this complex score with impressive assurance."

- BBC Music Magazine on Symphony No.12

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OUT OF DARKNESS



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- The Washington Post

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AVAILABLE AT:



Balance and care: Giancarlo Guerrero conducts his Nashville Symphony Orchestra in colourful, compelling and well-built music by Roberto Sierra

Brahms in a slow movement which plumbs the instrument's dark side.

Ländler Land, inspired by Tony Gatlif's 1993 documentary about the Roma, uses three cellos and two pianos to create yet another meandering score which Goode calls 'a concert piece or a piece for dancing, especially with the audience dancing'.

UC Santa Cruz professor Amy C Beal's vivid booklet-note essay exploring the music and Goode's life among the Big Apple's new-music downtown netherworld makes the music even more fun. **Laurence Vittes**

R Sierra

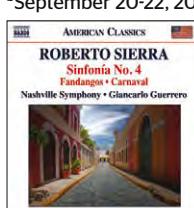
Fandangos^a. *Carnaval*^b. *Sinfonia No 4*^a

Nashville Symphony Orchestra /

Giancarlo Guerrero

Naxos American Classics ⑧ 8 559738 (56' • DDD)

Recorded live at Laura Turner Hall, Schermerhorn Symphony Center, Nashville, TN, ^aApril 19-21, ^bSeptember 20-22, 2012



Recorded live at Laura Turner Hall, the Nashville Symphony showcases its impressive command of colour, amplitude and virtuosity in three big orchestral pieces by Roberto Sierra, a vigorously active composer and educator

based at Cornell University, where he chairs the music department.

Carnaval sports the most compelling sounds. Alluding to Schumann's themes 'not only by...quotes' from Schumann's *Carnaval*, as Sierra writes in his booklet-note, 'but also by the *character piece* nature of the movements,' he creates 20 minutes of orchestral wonder by processing his huge toolkit of compositional DNA devices with tremendous confidence and impressive construction skills.

'Gargoyles' starts off with a pounding, striding, mantra-like sweep. 'Unicorns' is a Trekkie's audiophile fantasy, stretching tendrils of light into ethereal distances of time. Heraldic xylophones introduce a spectacularly beautiful English horn solo before the story ends with *Rheingold* sighs. No let-up with 'The Phoenix', a long, slinky *crescendo* through Arabian nights, designed to leave audiences exhausted and yet wanting more.

Similarly with the 11 minutes of *Fandangos*: a sumptuous, seductive instrumentation of Soler, Boccherini and Scarlatti is distinguished by a sudden, hellish deconstructionist event towards the end. Sierra's *Sinfonia No 4*, however, written in 2008-09 to demonstrate the composer's 'relationship to the great symphonic tradition', does so comprehensively, mostly seamlessly and without seeming in the least

derivative, but overall lacks energy and snap.

The superb orchestral playing and Giancarlo Guerrero's balance and care at the quieter moments are spotlighted in Naxos's stunning sound. The composer's booklet-note bespeaks a learned, poetic mind. **Laurence Vittes**

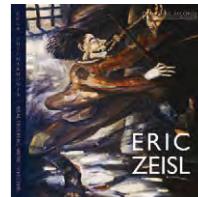
Zeisl

Little Symphony after Pictures of Roswitha Bitterlich. November: Six Sketches. Concerto grosso^a

^aAntonio Lysy VC

UCLA Philharmonia / Neal Stulberg

Yarlung ⑧ YAR96820 (74' • DDD)



ERIC
ZEISL

The flow of émigré composers to Los Angeles in the late 1930s included

Viennese-born Eric Zeisl, who worked reluctantly in Hollywood's film studios while teaching and focusing on what he loved most – writing music for the concert hall and stage. On this valuable recording featuring the UCLA Philharmonia under Neal Stulberg, the Vienna and Los Angeles sides of Zeisl's art are explored to striking effect.

It is understandable why Zeisl (1905-59) would have appealed to the movie industry. His music is descriptive, colourful and



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"Jeanne Lamon leads animated, rhythmically incisive performances ... Ms. Lamon and Tafelmusik extend the expressive range typically associated with period-instrument ensembles, moving freely between sharply etched articulation and a caressing portamento."

The New York Times

Also just released:



House of Dreams
 Jeanne Lamon, Music Director
 A musical journey to the meeting places of Baroque art and music
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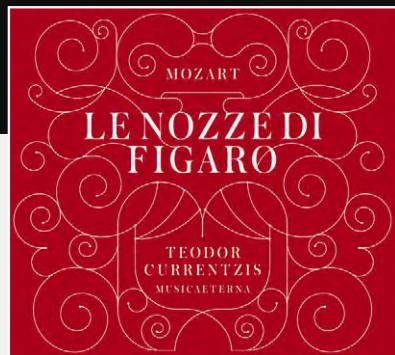


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THE SCENE

This month: site-specific Rameau, Brittenmania continues, there's a stage premiere as well as a rarely performed Rimsky-Korsakov work, and a chance to hear Schoenberg's Piano Concerto

SEATTLE, WA

Seattle Symphony

Jonathan Biss performs Schoenberg
(June 12, 14 & 15)

The acclaimed pianist (and now online piano professor) takes a break from the core 18th- and 19th-century repertoire he's been focusing on this season (Mozart, Beethoven and Schumann) to tackle a mid-20th-century work: Schoenberg's Piano Concerto. This is Biss's debut performance of Schoenberg's dense, contrapuntal piece. He performs here on a programme with the Seattle Symphony, led by Ludovic Morlot. The concerto is bookended by Johann Strauss II's *Emperor Waltzes* and Brahms's Symphony No 2 in D.

seattlesymphony.org

SAN FRANCISCO, CA

San Francisco Symphony

MTT and Britten (June 12-14; 19-21; 26-29)

Michael Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony close the 2013-14 season with a survey of Britten. Highlights include excerpts from the composer's *The Prince of the Pagodas* (paired with Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No 2 with Gil Shaham as soloist). Another programme features Britten's Serenade for tenor, horn and strings with french-horn player Robert Ward and tenor Toby Spence; Britten's colleague and friend Shostakovich's Symphony No 15; and Copland's *Danzón cubano*. The orchestra also presents its debut of Britten's opera *Peter Grimes*, in a semi-staged concert production, with tenor Stuart Skelton and soprano Elza van den Heever heading up the cast. A one-night-only concert featuring 'Four Sea Interludes' from *Peter Grimes* mixes music with an original video presentation created by artist Tal Rosner.

sfsymphony.org

SANTA BARBARA, CA

Music Academy of the West

Festival (June 16 - August 9)

Highlights of this year's eight-week festival include a fully staged production of *Carmen*, presented as an 80th-birthday tribute to Marilyn Horne, who's not only an academy alumna but has also headed up the voice programme since 1997. This year the academy bolsters its music faculty with Glenn Dicterow, who's retiring this year from his seat as concertmaster of the New York Philharmonic. The acclaimed and

EVENT OF THE MONTH



innovative chamber music ensemble Eighth Blackbird also appears; and, of course, there'll be plenty of opportunities to hear the exceptionally talented singers and instrumentalists who comprise the academy fellows.

musicacademy.org

NEW YORK, NY

On Site Opera

Rameau: Pygmalion (June 17, 20 & 21)

Founded in 2012, On Site Opera is dedicated to producing exciting opera outside the walls of traditional venues, moulding its productions to specific locations. This year it pushes the boundaries of the art form in ever more inventive ways, with Rameau's *Pygmalion* staged at two unorthodox but apt locations: Madame Tussauds and a mannequin showroom in Manhattan. Since the libretto, after Ovid, tells the story of the sculptor Pygmalion falling in love with his statue, the context of looming wax figures and mannequins will surely add a surreal dimension to this 1748 one-act work.

osopera.org

CHICAGO, IL

Chicago Symphony Orchestra

Muti Conducts Mahler (June 19-21)

Maestro Riccardo Muti has tended to keep a respectful distance from Mahler's music,

BROOKLYN, NY

Brooklyn Academy of Music

Michael Hersch's first opera: On the Threshold of Winter (June 25)

This is the world premiere of Michael Hersch's first opera, *On the Threshold of Winter*. The American composer's two-act opera, which marks a much-anticipated debut for the stage, is based on *The Bridge*, the harrowing final work of Romanian author, poet and painter Marin Sorescu. Suffering from the late stages of cancer, Sorescu wrote these poems in hospital in 1996, during his final weeks of life. The opera is performed by soprano Ah Young Hong and a collective of chamber musicians, Nunc, to be conducted by Tito Muñoz, who was recently appointed music director of the Phoenix Symphony.

bam.org

preferring to let other conductors take the plunge when it comes to some of those mighty symphonies. And yet Muti and the CSO bring the season to a close with Mahler's Symphony No 1, a work he has previously recorded (with the Philadelphia Orchestra). This is paired with Schubert's Fifth, a work by a composer much closer to the conductor's heart, whose music has been featured throughout the season.

cso.org

NEW YORK, NY

Lincoln Center Festival

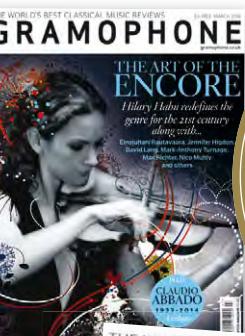
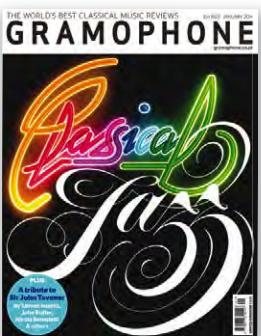
The Bolshoi Opera and Bolshoi Orchestra: Rimsky-Korsakov: The Tsar's Bride (July 12-13)

The combined creative Bolshoi forces for Rimsky-Korsakov's rarely heard *The Tsar's Bride* means this is a hot ticket at the festival (which later also plays host to the Bolshoi Ballet). This concert version is led by Gennadi Rozhdestvensky, who has established a towering reputation in Russia at the Bolshoi and beyond. Rimsky-Korsakov's melody-rich melodrama is sung by an ensemble of soloists from the Bolshoi. Sharing the role of Marfa, the ill-fated bride of Ivan the Terrible, will be the sopranos Anna Aglatova and Dinara Alieva.

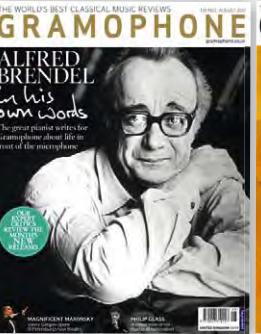
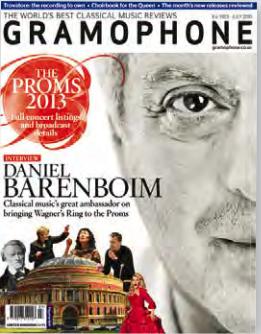
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Why is the wider media failing classical music?

Attend classical music concerts – be it at Southbank Centre in season or at the Proms in the summer – and you’d be forgiven for thinking that the appetite for classical music remains as strong as ever. Both venues buzz with a surprisingly wide range of people thirsting for a profound artistic experience. So does the Barbican. And Manchester’s Bridgewater Hall. And the Berlin Philharmonie. Pre-concert anticipation retains its thrill, and equally rewarding is the chance to pore over the performance afterwards as the crowds linger in places that increasingly see themselves as destinations in their own right, not merely concert halls. Classical music – even when the actual music is hundreds of years old – feels vibrantly alive, and that’s something you’ll always find celebrated in our pages as we explore and assess the recorded side of music-making.

The wider media, however, doesn’t seem to see it like that. Newspapers are, increasingly, marginalising the coverage given to classical music. In recent years many newspapers have reduced the number of critics on their payroll and the space afforded to those that are left. Websites allow newspapers to see how many people are reading what, and to make their editorial decisions accordingly. It is, of course, self-fulfilling: if you don’t give the space to classical music then people won’t read about it and the audience shrinks. The arts – let alone classical music – will never, sadly, generate as many hits as other fields. Chasing clicks for clicks’ sake – or, in the case of broadcasting, audiences for audiences’ sake – always risks pandering to the lowest common denominator.



Of the titles covering London, *Time Out* dropped the post of classical music editor late last year, and the morning freesheet *Metro* has now stopped publishing daily concert reviews. London is one of the great cities in the world for music, so these seem very depressing steps taken by those purporting to survey the city scene. Music – of every genre – is one of the UK’s great success stories, and classical music a significant part of that. The *Metro* says it will still cover the arts through features, but daily reviews act as an important barometer of the musical climate. The situation is even worse in America.

There are exceptions, both in print and on the airwaves. BBC director general Tony Hall has just promised ‘the biggest push we’ve made for the arts in a generation’ – it’s a bold and encouraging claim, and one that whoever succeeds Roger Wright as controller of Radio 3 should hold him to.

Those making decisions about the place of classical music in the wider media should visit events such as Radio 3’s recent Southbank Centre residency and look around them. They’ll see a substantial audience that is engaged, inquisitive, passionate and there for the long haul (during which they will happily part with substantial amounts of money to pursue that interest).

People want to know more about classical music, and *Gramophone* will continue to offer informed, considered and contextualised opinion and advocacy for it. It’s a position I’m proud we hold – but I just wish we weren’t so increasingly alone in doing so.

martin.cullingford@markallengroup.com

THIS MONTH’S CONTRIBUTORS



‘With a lifetime’s involvement with choirs of all shapes and sizes, I’m an ardent admirer of composers who

write original and distinctive choral music,’ says **MARC ROCHESTER**. ‘I have become particularly intrigued by the way in which James MacMillan has maintained his strong Scottish heritage while working in an international arena.’



JEREMY NICHOLAS, who’s written about the resurgence of interest in the organ, says: ‘In the right hands

(and feet), there are few musical experiences more thrilling than an organ recital. I’ve discovered that with new ways of presentation and a more flexible repertoire, audiences are flocking to them in a way that hasn’t been seen for over a century.’



“Poor you” was a musician friend’s off-the-cuff reaction as I prepared to immerse myself in CPE Bach,’ says **RICHARD WIGMORE**. ‘How wrong she was. Prolonged absorption in CPE’s waywardly inventive, often astonishing music has only increased my admiration for the 18th century’s greatest musical eccentric.’

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Andrew Achenbach surveys the recordings of Vaughan Williams's ferocious Symphony No 4

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New Releases



Disc of the Month

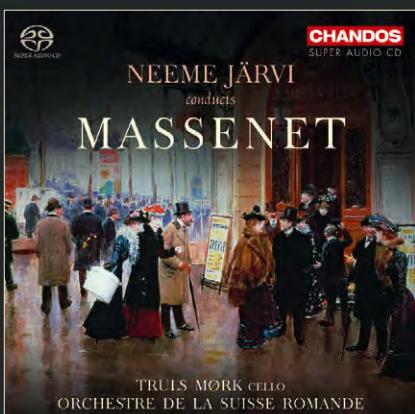
Walton

Symphony No. 1 / Violin Concerto

TASMIN LITTLE violin
BBC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
EDWARD GARDNER

The brilliance, volatility, and power of William Walton's Symphony No. 1 is here contrasted with the warmth and lyrical beauty of the Violin Concerto. Conducting the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Edward Gardner is joined by Tasmin Little in a winning partnership established last year with their outstanding recording of Britten's Violin Concerto, described by *The Sunday Times* as 'the finest committed to disc'.

CHSA 5136



Massenet Orchestral Works

Including the *Ouverture de 'Phèdre'*, *Le Cid* ballet suite, and *Scènes pittoresques*, among others, this disc showcases Massenet's orchestral writing. Truls Mørk joins Neeme Järvi and the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande in several works featuring cello solo, including the rarely heard *Fantaisie*.

CHSA 5137



Rachmaninoff Piano Sonatas

Young American pianist Xiayin Wang presents her second disc of works by Rachmaninov, this time tackling his two piano sonatas alongside Preludes Nos 4, 5 and 6. She impressed with her first disc, Gramophone remarking that 'here... is playing of an awesome clarity and poise.'

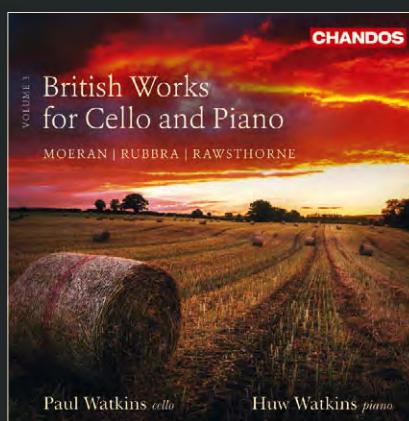
CHAN 10816



Bach Italian Concerto / French Overture

The 'Italian' Concerto and 'French' Overture that comprise Bach's *Clavier-Übung II* were composed, according to Bach himself, 'for music lovers to refresh their spirits'. Harpsichordist Steven Devine here performs them alongside the Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue, Aria Variata, and Fantasia in C minor.

CHAN 0802



Paul Watkins cello

Huw Watkins piano

British Works for Cello and Piano, Vol. 3

The Watkins brothers perform cello sonatas by Rawsthorne, Rubbra, and Moeran in their third volume of works by British composers. Their affinity with this repertoire has been well proven, Gramophone declaring of Vol.2 that they 'have all this music in their very being'.

CHAN 10818

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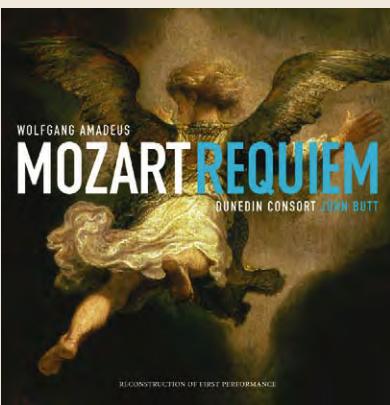
GRAMOPHONE Editor's choice



Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings from this month's reviews



RECORDING OF THE MONTH



MOZART

Requiem
Soloists; Dunedin
Consort / John Butt
Linn CKD449
► DAVID THREASHER'S
REVIEW IS ON
PAGE 28

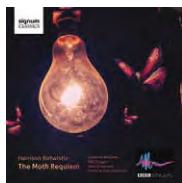
Every disc from the Dunedin Consort feels important, worthwhile and necessary. David Threasher's review discusses this new edition of the Requiem – of which John Butt's realisation is compelling listening.



PAGANINI 'Fantasy'
Nemanja Radulović vn

DG/Discovery 481 0655
You need to know from the off that you're in entirely sure hands with works of such fiery virtuosity; and you are. From the opening Caprice onwards, it's a thrilling ride of great self-confidence and expression.

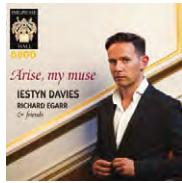
► REVIEW ON PAGE 37



BIRTWISTLE
The Moth Requiem
BBC Singers /
Nicholas Kok
Signum SIGCD368

Poignancy and a haunting reflective quality lie at the heart of this collection of choral works by Birtwistle – an important 80th birthday celebration of one of our most significant composers.

► REVIEW ON PAGE 72



'ARISE, MY MUSE'
Iestyn Davies countertenor
Wigmore Hall Live
 WHLIVE0065
Iestyn Davies is as engagingly communicative as always here, as too are his colleagues. A wonderful sense of collaboration runs throughout this Restoration recital.

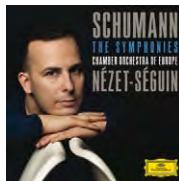
► REVIEW ON PAGE 81



DVD/BLU-RAY
BELLINI La sonnambula

Stuttgart State Opera / Gabriele Ferro
EuroArts DVD 205 9338; 205 9334
Two months after one recommended *La sonnambula*, another one – this time a sadder, darker directorial interpretation that both moves and convinces.

► REVIEW ON PAGE 90



SCHUMANN

Symphonies Nos 1-4
COE / Yannick Nézet-Séguin
DG 2 479 2437GH2
Smaller forces than usual, but the outcome is brilliant detail. Nézet-Séguin proves why he is one of the most exciting of a remarkably rich generation of young conductors.

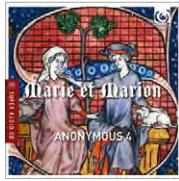
► REVIEW ON PAGE 40



HANDEL
'Peace and Celebration'
European Union Baroque Orchestra / Lars Ulrik Mortensen
Obsidian CD711

The choir of Clare College, Cambridge, together with their EUBO colleagues and countertenor Alex Potter, show a perfect balance of restraint and exuberance.

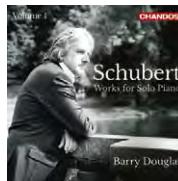
► REVIEW ON PAGE 74



'MARIE ET MARION'

Anonymous 4
Harmonia Mundi
 HMU80 7524
The delicacy and detail of these songs from 13th-century France are beautifully and captivatingly caught by Anonymous 4 in their return to the Montpellier Codex.

► REVIEW ON PAGE 85



SCHUBERT

Piano Works, Vol 1
Barry Douglas pf
Chandos CHAN10807
The B flat Sonata seems a bold way to begin a solo Schubert cycle – but why not? Douglas's thoughtful interpretation sets the tone wonderfully for what should be a fascinating and personal journey.

► REVIEW ON PAGE 64



SCHUBERT

Winterreise
Jonas Kaufmann ten
Helmut Deutsch pf
Sony Classical
 88883 79565-2

Another superb traversal of Schubert's song-cycle – but one that reveals how varied approaches can reap riches. It is full of all the sense of drama you'd expect.

► REVIEW ON PAGE 79



RACHMANINOV

Complete Songs
Various Sgrs;
Iain Burnside pf
Delphian DCD34127
'Voices in the ranges and of the temperaments and timbres for which they were intended' – that, along with interpretative excellence, defines this wonderful set.

► REVIEW ON PAGE 87



Gramophone Player

Hear a high-quality sample of the music online

FOR THE RECORD



David Aaron Carpenter takes the 'Macdonald' Stradivarius viola for a spin ahead of its sale by Sotheby's

The most expensive instrument ever offered for sale – \$45m for a Strad viola

The 'Macdonald' viola by Antonio Stradivari, writes Caroline Gill, is being offered for sale by Sotheby's in New York with an asking price of \$45m (the successful bidder will be notified in late June). The instrument was owned by Peter Schidlof (d1987), the viola player and one of the founders of the Amadeus Quartet. Although he didn't always play the 'Macdonald' in the quartet, its golden sound was beautifully evident when he did: the instrument has a distinctive alto quality that isn't as dark as that of many violas.

The viola was made in 1719, near the end of Stradivari's 'golden' period – the period during which he made the instruments commonly held to be his greatest work. Stradivari made hundreds of instruments, but only 10 complete violas, making them by far the rarest examples of his work. The 'Macdonald' is one of only two Stradivari violas in private hands.

The sale will be conducted by sealed bids; and if the viola sells for its asking price, or even a reduced amount of around \$30m, its status as a playing instrument may be compromised. Simply moving it around the world for concerts would create vast expense in terms of insurance and travel to the point where the amount paid for it may be considered to be more of a poisoned chalice than an indication of the true value of the instrument.



Detroit Symphony Orchestra starts streamed HD webcasts

Following the settlement of a long and, at times, acrimonious dispute, the Detroit Symphony Orchestra is back performing and has followed the Berlin Philharmonic down the live video-streaming route – the first American orchestra to embrace this new technology. New state-of-the-art high-definition robotic cameras have been fitted in



The newly fitted Sony HD cameras film the Detroit SO

Harnoncourt honoured by BPO

While on tour in Austria, the Berlin Philharmonic presented Nikolaus Harnoncourt with honorary membership of the orchestra at the Musikverein in Vienna. Harnoncourt first conducted the BPO in 1991 and since then has given more than 90 concerts and made a number of highly regarded Teldec recordings with them.

Max Richter signs to DG

The British composer Max Richter, well known for his film scores (*Shutter Island* and *Waltz with Bashir* among them) and for his 'recomposition' of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, has signed a contract with DG. The agreement will see the reissue on the Yellow Label of a number of Richter's albums as well as a new recording of *Memoryhouse*. DG will also issue a special edition of the Vivaldi/Richter *Four Seasons* with a DVD and an interactive app.

Genesis Foundation commissions

The Sixteen are giving the premiere of (and recording for their own label, Coro) three new settings of the *Stabat mater*. Commissioned by the Genesis Foundation, Alissa Firsova, Tõnu Kõrvits and Matthew Martin have all composed settings of this 13th-century meditation on the Virgin Mary at the foot of the Cross. The works will be premiered at London's LSO St Luke's at lunchtime on June 4 and then performed again at the Victoria and Albert Museum later the same day.

RFH organ revived and recorded

The RFH's Harrison & Harrison organ, newly restored, was unveiled at a gala concert which featured two new works (by Sir Peter Maxwell Davies and the late Sir John Tavener) and

Orchestra Hall and concerts are streamed via the DSO's website (dso.org/live). 'Webcasts are now part of the DNA of this organisation,' said the DSO's executive producer of digital media, Scott Harrison. 'Making sure we stay in the forefront of the classical music streaming trend is part of what makes us the most accessible orchestra on the planet.'



Spectacular: the restored organ at RFH in London

employed four different organists. The following week, with James O'Donnell at the keyboard, it joined the LPO and Yannick Nézet-Séguin for two of the most popular of all works for organ and orchestra, Poulenc's Organ Concerto and Saint-Saëns's Third Symphony, *Organ* – both works were recorded for release on the LPO's own label.

Seattle Symphony label

The Seattle Symphony and its music director Ludovic Morlot have launched their own label and have released their first three recordings. One is devoted to Henri Dutilleux and includes his Symphony No 1, the cello concerto *Tout un monde lointain* (with Xavier Phillips) and *The Shadows of Time*. Another French repertoire recording links Saint-Saëns (*Organ* Symphony, with soloist Joseph Adam) with music by Ravel. The third disc unites Ives's Symphony No 2 with Elliott Carter's *Instances* (dedicated to Morlot) and Gershwin's *An American in Paris*.

Roger Wright exits BBC Radio 3

The Controller of Radio 3 and director of the Proms Roger Wright leaves the BBC to become chief executive of Aldeburgh Music from September.

PHOTOGRAPHY: AKOS SIMON; CORINNE WISEMAN; TIMOTHY COCHRANE ILLUSTRATION: TIM KIRBY

During May, the Detroit Symphony Orchestra can be seen, and heard, alongside major artists including Louis Lortie and Thierry Fischer (May 2), Yefim Bronfman and DSO music director Leonard Slatkin (May 18), Zuill Bailey and Carlos Kalmar (May 22), and Slatkin in Mahler's Third Symphony with mezzo-soprano Elizabeth Bishop (May 30). For more details go to 'Performances & Events' on pages 110-11.



Qobuz brings its download and streaming site to the UK in April

The French download and streaming service Qobuz (named after a Kazakh stringed instrument) launches in the UK at the end of April. Unlike most of its competitors, it combines high-quality streaming (320 Kbps) with DRM-free downloading (at 16-bit/44.1kHz or, in some instances, 24-bit/192kHz). Qobuz prides itself on an extensive classical catalogue of some 20 million tracks, including almost 6000 albums in Studio Master sound – making it the largest such offering in existence.

Qobuz was founded in 2007 by industry veteran Yves Reisel – who had launched Abeille Musique as one of France's leading distributors – and Alexandre Leforestier. Following the April launch in the UK and western Europe, Qobuz plans to expand into the Nordic countries in June, Canada in July and the USA towards the end of the year.

Qobuz offers four different streaming subscription packages: Qobuz Basic (MP3 at 320 Kbps, PC only) at £4.99 per month; Qobuz Premium (as Basic, but for all mobile apps and for offline and audio-connected devices) at £9.99; Qobuz Hi-Fi Classical (FLAC, 16-bit/44.1kHz) at £14.99; and Qobuz Hi-Fi (as Hi-Fi Classical, but with access to the full – ie non-classical as well as classical – catalogue) at £19.99.

The company has also invested in making the listening experience as consistently 'hi-fi' as possible with an easy interface with home music streaming systems such as the American Sonos, which allows music to be listened to throughout the home. Full details and free trial at qobuz.com.

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NEW FEATURES

Philip Clark searches for the crossroads between literature, art and music, meeting writers Will Self, Iain Sinclair and artist Chris Gollon along the way. And Bryce Morrison recalls the life-changing moment when he met pianist Vladimir Horowitz. There are also brand new podcasts with Iain Burnside, Daniel Hyde and Richard Egarr to download.

AND THERE'S MORE...

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Maverick genius:

CPE Bach produced music unlike anything else composed in the 18th century, says Richard Wigmore, music that both looked forward to Romanticism and back to the Baroque

Bach is the father, we are the children'. To us this famous accolade attributed to Mozart could only refer to Johann Sebastian. Not, though, in the late-18th century. By then 'old' Bach's music was deemed the province of pedagogues and musical antiquarians. Except in England, where Sebastian's youngest son, Johann Christian, temporarily held sway, the 'great Bach' invariably denoted JS's second son Carl Philipp Emanuel, revered as one of the supreme composers and keyboard virtuosos of the age.

In 1774 the composer-cum-critic JF Reichardt declared that 'We have only one Bach, whose manner is entirely original and peculiar to him alone.' When Emanuel Bach died, lauded with honours, in 1788, one obituary proclaimed that 'his compositions are masterpieces and will endure magnificently after the jumble of modern Klingklang is forgotten,' mourning that 'music loses with him one of its greatest jewels, and the name of Carl Philipp Emanuel will remain forever sacred.' Yet his death evidently failed to percolate through to Haydn. Disembarking in Hamburg in August 1795, en route from London to Vienna, he called on Bach, only to be told by his surviving daughter that he was seven years too late.

Nowadays Emanuel Bach and his exact contemporary Gluck are acknowledged as the most significant figures of what is unflatteringly called the 'transitional' period, between the High Baroque of Handel and JS Bach, and the Classicism of Haydn and Mozart. One of the fascinations in Emanuel's prolific output is the tension between old and new. Within a single work you can find Baroque contrapuntal textures and phraseology, suave galanterie and audacious chromatic harmonies that look beyond Classicism to the Romantic age. Unpredictability, paradox, incongruity are the order of the day. Small wonder that in his lifetime Emanuel Bach acquired a reputation for 'bizarrie'.

CPE Bach's most personal music represents the pinnacle of *Empfindsamkeit*, the cult of 'heightened sensibility' practised by a group of North-German composers in reaction to the rational, empirical strain in Enlightenment thinking. This celebration of pure feeling was related to a whole aesthetic movement whose literary manifestations included the novels of Samuel Richardson, Laurence Sterne (to whose antic prose CPE's music was often compared) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The credo of *Empfindsamkeit* was that music should 'touch the heart' and 'awaken the passions'. In lesser hands this could lead to cloying sentimentality. But in Bach's finest sonatas and orchestral works, halting, sighing phrases, explosive disruptions and disorienting harmonies combine to produce music unlike anything else composed in the 18th century.

Born in Weimar in 1714, Emanuel grew up in the musically rich atmosphere of Leipzig, where, as he noted, 'I had from an early age the special good fortune of hearing the most excellent music of all kinds all around me.' He quickly excelled on the harpsichord; and by the age of 11 he could apparently play any of his father's keyboard pieces at sight.

Like Handel and his own godfather Telemann, Emanuel initially studied law. Then, after graduating in Frankfurt an der Oder in 1738, he received what he termed 'an unexpected and gracious summons...from the then crown prince of Prussia', the future Frederick the Great. Frederick, who succeeded his father, Frederick William I, in 1740, was the century's most paradoxical monarch: on the one hand a ruthless potentate whose military adventures became the model for later German expansionism; on the other a Francophile son of the Enlightenment, an avid social reformer, and a musician who made the gentle, pastoral flute the must-play instrument of the European gentleman amateur. Frederick was initially forced to conceal his musical establishment from his abusive father, and paid his musicians'

Music loses with him one of its greatest jewels, and the name of Carl Philipp Emanuel will remain forever sacred'



Adolph Menzel's 'Frederick the Great's Flute Concert in Sans Souci' (1852) features CPE at the keyboard with Frederick playing the flute. Quantz is listening (far right).

salaries by secretly borrowing from foreign governments. Emanuel Bach would remain in his service for 30 years.

As harpsichordist at Frederick's court, first at Ruppin and Rheinsberg, then in Potsdam, Bach stood some way down the musical pecking order. Above him were Kapellmeister Carl Heinrich Graun and Johann Joachim Quantz, Frederick's pet flautist-cum-flute-teacher. Quantz was not only paid far more lavishly, but also enjoyed unique powers in the court.

A far less compliant personality (not for nothing was he a Bach), Emanuel came to resent both his financial status and the pervasive atmosphere of sycophancy. Frederick's flute playing, which he often accompanied, was tolerable, but nowhere near as good as the flatterers pretended. When one obsequious courtier gushed 'what rhythm!' during a royal performance, Emanuel retorted, *sotto voce*, 'what rhythms'.

At the Prussian court Bach wrote a fair amount of utility music, including easy keyboard pieces and flute sonatas probably intended for the king. But he announced himself as a composer of restless imagination and daring with the so-called 'Prussian' Sonatas of 1742, and, two years later, a set of six sonatas dedicated to his former pupil the Duke of Württemberg. For the harpsichordist Mahan Esfahani, who has recently recorded the 'Württemberg' Sonatas (2/14), Emanuel Bach belongs to a select band of composers who 'transform the keyboard', like William Byrd before him and Beethoven after him. 'These amazing sonatas become a medium for contending with intellectual quandaries – and we should remember that CPE was a great intellectual. In them he conjures amazing sound

worlds, fantastic images. Dance, song, speech, prose, melody all mix in an inspired, wacky, primordial soup!'

In his autobiography of 1773 Emanuel declared that 'my only teacher was my father.' We can hear what he meant in the ingenious two-part invention that closes the B minor 'Württemberg' Sonata No 6. But these sonatas, written while

Johann Sebastian was still alive, belong to a different aesthetic. The rhetoric of opera – say, in the first two movements of that B minor Sonata – coexists with Bach's own brand of 'sensibility'. There is wit aplenty, albeit of an edgy sort. Yet, as Mahan Esfahani warns, 'we should be careful not to treat CPE as some kind of musical madman, a Gesualdo figure. He was a great musical thinker, like his father, and saw music as a language to be investigated, questioned and created anew. Like other German intellectuals of his time he was responsive to extra-musical trends, in philosophy and literature. CPE's music often seems to suggest an underlying text.'

Bach conceived his solo keyboard music for the clavichord, a delicate, essentially private instrument that crucially influenced his subjective

musical language. Visiting Bach in Hamburg in 1772, the music historian Charles Burney (father of the novelist Fanny) penned a famous description of the composer rhapsodising on his favourite instrument: 'He grew so animated and possessed, that he not only played, but looked like one inspired. His eyes were fixed, his under lip fell, and drops of effervescence distilled from his countenance.'

With a dynamic range stretching from *p* to *ppppp*, the fragile clavichord is hardly an option for public performance.



CPE Bach was a great thinker, says Mahan Esfahani

Mahan Esfahani makes a vivid case for Emanuel Bach on the harpsichord. Another CPE champion, Danny Driver, prefers the piano. ‘There’s no single right instrument for his music. He knew the clavichord, harpsichord and fortepiano, and in his later works his imagination swirled with all three instruments in mind: florid passages are especially suited to the harpsichord, while snatches of cantilena, like hints of Mozart opera arias, seem to demand the fortepiano. For me, Bach’s *Empfindsamkeit* is best served with a touch-sensitive instrument. The range of tone colour and dynamics at my disposal on a modern piano are invaluable for music with such extreme, unprepared contrasts!'

On the two discs issued so far, Danny Driver has explored a spectrum of Bach’s keyboard works from sonatas of c1740 to the broodingly inward F sharp minor Fantasie composed the year before his death. Most extraordinary of all, for Driver, are two sonatas from the 1740s, in G minor, Wotquenne 65/17 (Wotquenne was to Bach what Köchel was to Mozart), and F sharp minor, Wq52/4. ‘The first movement of the G minor combines an outline of sonata form with a wild, free fantasia. The F sharp minor also mixes fast, florid music and operatic lyricism, with the two elements conversing and arguing for the whole movement. But I don’t think these abrupt changes affect the music’s unity: the sonatas are all highly structured, with the opposing elements finely balanced.’

Emanuel Bach expounded his aesthetic and keyboard method in his *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*, probably the century’s most influential treatise. Haydn, whose keyboard style was profoundly affected by Bach, and Beethoven both knew it. One of its most characteristic dicta is ‘since a musician cannot move others unless he himself is moved, he must of necessity feel all of the affects that he hopes to arouse in his listeners.’ To accompany the *Essay* Bach wrote a heterogeneous set of sonatas and sonatinas (the *Probestücke*, Wq63), ranging from innocuous galanterie to some of his most audacious and visionary music. Most visionary of all is the finale of the F minor sonata, No 6, an impassioned fantasia whose melodies seem to evoke heightened speech: just the kind of piece to evoke Burney’s description of Bach at the clavichord.

In contrast to these private outpourings are the fiery symphonies and harpsichord concertos (some later arranged for flute and/or cello) that Bach composed for the Berlin concert hall. Together with the urbane concertos of Emanuel’s half-brother Johann Christian, the harpsichord concertos form a crucial link between Vivaldi and the Classical concerto of Mozart. But to regard them as merely ‘transitional’ (dread word) is to miss their brilliance and originality. Even at his most compliant, Bach is always likely to pull the rug from under your feet with a startling hiatus or harmonic swerve. His most characteristic *Allegros* – as in the D minor Concerto, Wq23, with its boldly swooping main theme – have a hectic nervous energy that prefigures the so-called *Sturm und Drang* (‘Storm and Stress’) movement.

Bach’s stand-out choral work from these years is his *Magnificat* of 1749, which, as conductor Hans-Christoph Rademann points out, he probably composed with a view to succeeding his father as Leipzig Thomaskantor. On one level it stands as a homage to Johann Sebastian, not least in the majestic final fugue. Adds Rademann: ‘There are many echoes of JS Bach’s *Magnificat*: in the rushing D major scales of the opening, and the almost literal quotations in the “Fecit potentiam” and “Depositum”. But there are also strong differences. The alto aria “Suscepit Israel”, for example, is a beautiful example of CPE Bach’s *Empfindsamkeit*.’



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Andreas Staier, a long-standing eloquent advocate of CPE Bach

Never a man to underestimate his artistic and financial worth, Emanuel became increasingly disenchanted with his meagrely paid job at the Prussian court. The final straw came when Frederick refused to compensate his musicians for the losses they had suffered during the Seven Years' War (1756-63). An escape route finally opened up in 1767. As Bach put it in his autobiography, 'I was summoned to Hamburg as director of music in the place of the late Kapellmeister Telemann... Since I have been here I have again received several very advantageous offers to go elsewhere, but have declined them on each occasion.'

Bach's official duties, which included the provision of Passions and cantatas for the five main Hamburg churches, left him ample time to relish the cultivated, informal atmosphere of the prosperous Hanseatic city-state. His sacred works from these years, often recycled from earlier music, can be bland and pallid. But there are exceptions: the setting of Klopstock's ode *Morgengesang* ('Morning Song'), widely praised for its 'sublime simplicity', and a classic example of the *empfindsamer Stil* ('sensitive style'); the 'sacred poem for singing', *Die Israeliten in der Wüste* ('The Israelites in the Desert'), which marries a graceful, popular tone with subjective intimacy; and the

KEY DATES

1714	Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach born in Weimar on March 8
1730-31	Composes earliest works, under father's supervision
1738	Appointed 'first harpsichordist' to Frederick, crown prince of Prussia
1742	Publishes first keyboard collection, the 'Prussian' Sonatas, Wq48
1749	Composes Magnificat
1750	Johann Sebastian Bach dies on July 28
1753	Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments
1755	Salary at the Prussian court raised from 300 to 500 thalers after he threatens to resign
1767	Appointed to succeed his godfather Telemann as director of music in Hamburg. Frederick reluctantly releases him.
1773	Publishes autobiography and composes string symphonies Wq182 for van Swieten
1779-87	Publishes six sets of keyboard music 'für Kenner und Liebhaber'
1788	Composes Double Concerto, Wq47. Dies of 'an acute chest ailment' in Hamburg on December 14

Resurrection cantata *Die Auferstehung und Himmelfahrt Jesu* ('Christ's Resurrection and Ascension'), which Bach rated as one of his finest masterpieces. His contemporaries agreed. As you might expect, the cantata has its share of soulful, elegiac numbers. But when the text throws up a graphic image, Bach responds with music of startling dramatic power: in an apocalyptic bass aria, or, most spectacularly, in the final chorus, with its harmonic thunderbolts and rollicking closing fugue, like a celestial jig.

Emanuel Bach's choral masterpiece, though, is the work he intended as 'his swansong in this type of composition': the monumental *Heilig* (Sanctus) for double choir and orchestra, first performed in Hamburg in 1776. The antiphonal choral exchanges of distant angels and 'present' people on earth, juxtaposing distant keys, culminate in a thrilling syncopated fugue that incorporates the *Te Deum* plainsong chant – a stirring tribute to his father's art. This rarely heard work is a favourite of Danny Driver's. 'Those harmonies still sound astonishing – it might be a neo-tonal work of the late-20th-century. With the two choirs in remote tonalities, Bach seems to be exploring effects of sound for sound's sake, like Debussy. And that final fugue indicates that he believed the old contrapuntal style still lived!'

In 1770, two years after settling in Hamburg, Emanuel announced that he was at work on 'six easy harpsichord concertos'. He was being a touch disingenuous here. While his description was evidently intended to woo the growing amateur market, the new concertos (Wq43) are just as technically challenging as his earlier keyboard concertos. For all their feints at galant suavity, they have all CPE's old fire and unpredictability; and one new feature is the way movements run into each other, often via a breathtaking harmonic twist. For Andreas Staier, long an eloquent advocate of CPE's music, the most daringly original are No 3 in E flat and No 4 in C minor. 'In the C minor we have a highly dramatic *Allegro assai* which CPE cuts in two to make room for two contrasting episodes – or are they movements? The first of these, *Poco adagio*, seems to have wafted in from the far side of the moon. We're left questioning whether the concerto is in one movement, like a fantasia for soloist and orchestra, or four. It's an astonishing cyclic conception that looks forward to Schubert's *Wanderer Fantasy*.'

Even more wilful are the two sets of symphonies Bach wrote in Hamburg: six for string orchestra commissioned by Gottfried van Swieten in 1773 (Wq182), and four for strings plus wind of 1775-6 (Wq183). Van Swieten stipulated that he should 'give himself free rein, without regard to the difficulties of execution'. Bach needed no encouragement. In these symphonies *Empfindsamkeit* confronts the violence of *Sturm und Drang* head-on. The composer seems more than ever intent on subverting norms of harmony, rhythm, phrase-length and dynamics. Each promise of solidity or galant euphony is disrupted by a tactless outburst or a swerve to an alien chord. Bach was not one to mellow with age.

'It's like being on a roller coaster with all that shocking stop-start writing,' says Trevor Pinnock, whose 1979 recording of the string symphonies is still the most exciting in the catalogue. 'As CPE intended, the music is enormously challenging to the players, with lots of awkward string crossings. And the level of invention, especially his manipulation of harmony, is extraordinary. You sense him breaking out of old constraints, forcing open new ways. When performing CPE's symphonies and keyboard works you have to be aware that an interruption will occur at any moment. But you also have to be closely attuned to his *affetuoso* sentiment.'

During his last decade Bach published six collections of sonatas, rondos and fantasias 'for connoisseurs and amateurs'

published between 1779 and 1787. More than in his earlier keyboard music, he was keen to appear up-to-date, hence his cultivation of the newly fashionable rondo form. Yet Bach being Bach, the rondos take their innocent themes as a cue for the most outrageous harmonic adventures. As usual, the fantasias sound like inspired improvisations, by turns wildly passionate and musingly introspective.

The moving F sharp minor *Freie Fantasie*, Wq67, was Emanuel's solo swansong. But the last major work of one of the great originals of the 18th, or any other, century, was a Double Concerto for the old-meets-new pairing of harpsichord and fortepiano: an apt epitaph for a composer who, Janus-like, looked back to the past and far into the future. The spirit is now more playful, and there are concessions to Classical decorum (this is, after all, 1788, the year of Mozart's last three symphonies). But the Double Concerto has all of CPE's wayward inventiveness, culminating in a madcap finale that, Haydn-like, makes comic capital of a little four-note figure. 'I love the lightning-swift conversation between the two instruments,' says Danny Driver, who enjoys playing the concerto with Mahan Esfahani. 'There's hardly a stretch of more than four bars without a change of sonority. It's a work of burning energy, musical stream-of-consciousness – typical of this most emotionally restless of composers!' **G**

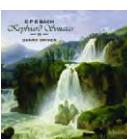
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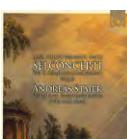
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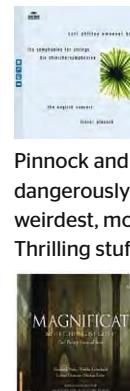
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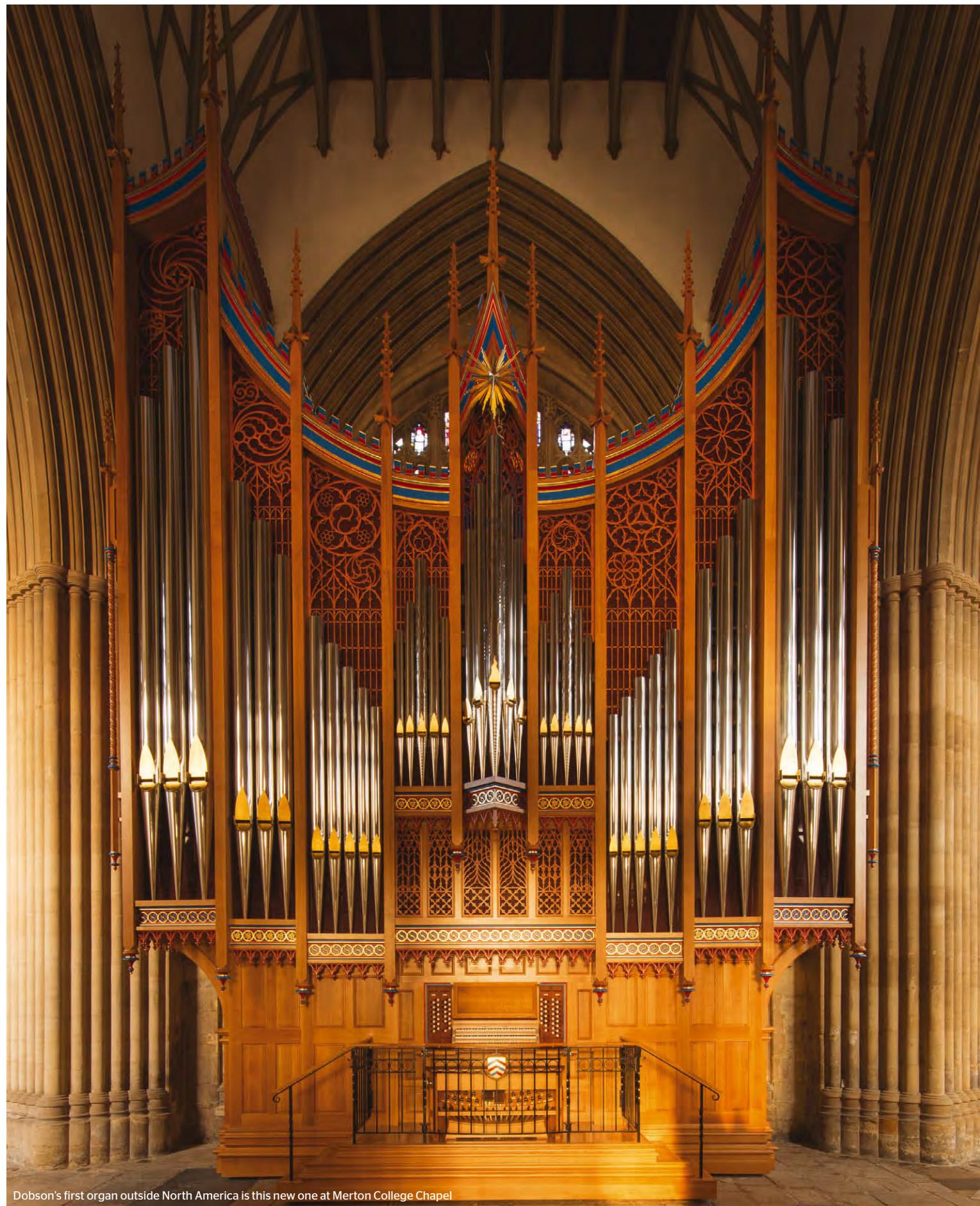
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ORGAN RENAISSANCE

Jeremy Nicholas speaks to organists Cameron Carpenter and Thomas Trotter – among others – about how they're reinventing the organ and the organ recital for the 21st century

Long before the concert began, dense crowds of concert goers stretched from the west porch of St Margaret's out to the street. Sometimes the congregation was so great that the London police had to make way for [the soloist's] carriage to pull up to the church. When the doors opened, the throng surged into the building, filling every seat. The doors were closed, the lights were lowered and the concert began, leaving a knot of disappointed latecomers outside the porch.'

That report was written around the end of the 19th century. What sort of concert was it? A piano recital, perhaps, or a rare appearance by a great violinist? What – or who – could draw such a huge crowd? Paderewski? Joachim? Today, perhaps only Lang Lang would inspire a similar kerfuffle. The last sentence of the report gives it away: 'London had seldom seen organ recitals so popular or heard the organ played so well.' The organist whom so many people came to hear was Edwin Lemare, the organist of St Margaret's, Westminster. He pulled them in week after week.

When was the last time you read of an organ recital in a church where latecomers who could not get in 'had their ears to the church door' in order to hear the music? Most organists would think they'd died and gone to heaven. So would their agents. So would the concert promoter. Organ recitals were major attractions in Lemare's day, and every self-respecting city and town in the land had a hall dominated by the most

magnificent instrument it could afford. But that was more than a century ago, before the advent of radio, cinema, TV and the gramophone, let alone all the other multimedia entertainments of the early 21st century. And Lemare was the greatest organist of the day, able to astonish audiences with his performances. Yes – astonish. When were you ever astonished at an organ recital?

I'll tell you when it happened to me: at a lunchtime recital in 1987 given at Birmingham Town Hall by the city organist, Thomas Trotter. He ended with Jongen's Toccata, Op 104, and the walls of the venerable building shook. The concert inspired me to start playing the organ again after a gap of many years and revived the enduring pleasure I first experienced at school (and which continues today) of playing for church services.

The other occasion that astonished me was watching Cameron Carpenter on YouTube playing the notorious left hand of Chopin's *Revolutionary Study* on the pedals. So who better to speak to about the organ and its current role in the 21st century than these two very different high-profile exponents of the instrument.

'The audience for organ recitals is practically non-existent,' says the flamboyant Carpenter. 'The real reason is almost nothing at all to do with what's played. It has to do with the person who is playing and their personality. Without stage charisma and talent, and if you don't account for the early years of the 21st century, you will have no audience. That is where



Stage charisma: Cameron Carpenter at his bespoke International Touring Organ



The refurbished Harrison & Harrison organ at London's Royal Festival Hall – currently being showcased in the Pull Out All the Stops festival, which ends on June 7

I would fault organists – for their insularity and specialisation. It would be easy for me to turn up at a venue and simply play only Sweelinck or Grigny and a large piece of Messiaen and then walk off the stage having amply fulfilled the requirements of the 21st-century organ recital. And I would have done the greatest disservice to people who were giving me a chance for the first time.'

It is a fact that most people – even serious music lovers – have never been to an organ recital. Their general perception of one is coloured by (unreasonable?) stereotypes: a thin house comprised almost entirely of white, middle-aged or elderly men (very few women) in tweed jackets, grey flannels and sensible shoes, who take their own sandwiches and a flask of tea for the interval; they sit in a freezing church on hard wooden pews; they can't see the organist because he or she is stuck out of view in the organ loft; they're fed a strict and predictable diet of Buxtehude, Bach and Karg-Elert; and if they're unlucky, there will be an unrepeatable new work by a friend of the organist or the organist himself. The events are almost uniformly desperately dull. People, by and large, don't go.

That is, until fairly recently – for the times they are a-changing. New organs are being built, old ones restored, new ways of presenting recitals have been introduced and savvy organists are drawing on repertoire outside the standard literature. 'You have to woo your audience a little bit more,' says Trotter, *titulaire* of St Margaret's, Westminster, like Lemare before him, and Birmingham City Organist for the past 30 years. 'Make yourself more accessible to the audience and make what you play more accessible. In recent years I've

tried to introduce the pieces in an informal way. I find that giving audiences a little signpost of what to listen out for makes them enjoy the music much more. People are fascinated by the organ, and if it's presented in the right way you can tap into that.'

Benjamin Nicholas (no relation – and of whom more later), director of music at Merton College, Oxford, agrees that more imaginative, varied programmes with greater musical breadth are what audiences want to hear. 'There's enough good original organ music and transcriptions to make for interesting recitals, but there's also an awful lot of tedious stuff that really is not recital fare. My particular gripe is seeing announcements of organ recitals but with no hint of who is playing or what is being played. You'd never expect that at Wigmore Hall! The other thing is if you treat an organ recital like a liturgical event, you're going to go wrong.'

Organ recitals in a concert hall have the visual allure and more comfortable seating, but many churches now have (or hire) a video link so that the audience can see the organist's hands, feet and changes of registration. A church has an atmosphere that a concert hall can never replicate – and some of the finest organs and acoustics are to be found in churches. Still, attracting an audience doesn't depend on the setting. 'With or without TV screens, you can play to half-empty halls and full churches,' says Trotter. 'Success relies on marketing, publicity and whether there's an established series. Also there was tremendous snobbery about the organ 30 years ago. Not any more. Then no one would dream of playing a transcription. People thought it was a huge joke, and those who did play them played them really badly. That all changed once people realised

that these arrangements require a great deal of skill. I've always taken them seriously, and I think the artistry of the player and the capabilities of the instrument can really be shown off in ways that sometimes the legitimate repertoire doesn't allow. I can play a Saint-Saëns Prelude and Fugue which is beautiful – but a lot less sophisticated than Lemare's arrangement of *Danse macabre*. Transcriptions are part of the organist's tradition and it's nice to explore them. If I play a challenging piece, I always include a lighter work to sweeten the pill, as it were. And you can't ever go wrong with Bach. Bach is never out of place in any recital. You've got to meet audiences halfway. You can't play just serious music or just Lefébure-Wély.'

Carpenter has his own trick up his sleeve to pull in the crowds: his own International Touring Organ (ITO), a new purpose-built transportable organ that he has designed with the American builders Marshall and Ogletree. 'It is very different to the usual run of digital organs from Rodgers, Allen or Johannus which, because they want to sell as many as possible to churches and the like, attempt to be all sorts of different organs in one, changing to a French or Italian organ at the touch of a button. Well, any organ that can change personality at the touch of a button has no personality. The ITO is a single-personality organ, as unique as, say, the organ in the Royal Albert Hall.'

It is transported in a truck – a total of 20 boxes of various sizes, of which 10 are proprietary subwoofers. There are three components: the console (with five manuals), the sound system and the computers. 'So whereas I'd spend one or two nights at, say, Symphony Hall in Birmingham registering the programme, the ITO requires about two hours to unload in the morning,' explains Carpenter. 'Then I tend to request two or four hours to adjust the organ to the hall, which I do during the course of rehearsal. I reckon the retail price would be about \$1m, which, I rush to point out, would not buy even half of one serious violin! When we talk about an organist, we do not talk about the sound of the artist in the same way as we do for a violinist or, especially, a singer. My concern is to have the ability to play my sound everywhere.'

It is not just the revitalisation of programmes and new ways of presenting them that have given the organ a boost in recent years. Worldwide, organ builders have never been busier. Trotter alone played the inaugural recitals on three new instruments in just the last year (some years he has played as many as five). With them often comes the commissioning of new works. Andrew Nethsingha, director of music at St John's College, Cambridge, says: 'The college has a long tradition of commissioning new works but we've recently been given a substantial anonymous donation for the purpose. The Herbert Howells Organ Fund will pay for one organ scholarship but also will be used for brand new works for the organ in the next few years. Our organ scholars can even suggest which composers they would like to write pieces for them. I don't know of any other institution that is able to commission organ music for students to premiere in this way.' The first piece to be commissioned from this fund is *Laudes* by Frances Pott, to be premiered at St John's College Chapel on April 30 (a live broadcast on BBC Radio 3). 'There's also an exciting pan-European project whereby over the next five years the fund will commission various composers to complete the *Orgel-Büchlein*. Bach intended to write about 164 chorales but only got around to doing 46. We hope we're going to fill in the missing chorales.'

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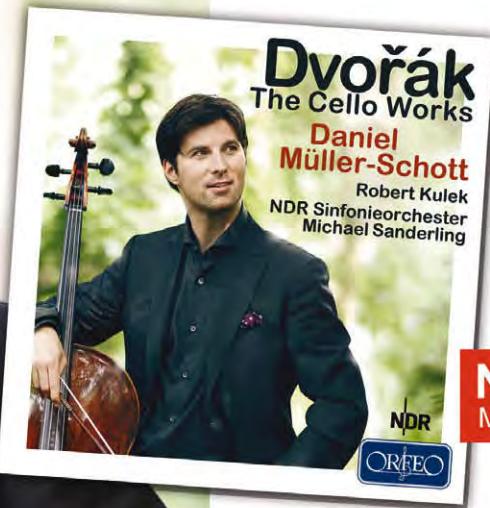


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musical activities, Nicholas realised that the Walker organ of the mid-1960s was not flexible enough for their purposes. 'There are some wonderful organs from that period that have stood the test of time,' he tells me, 'the Frobenius in Queen's College being one of the best – a remarkable instrument. But we needed something more versatile. So realising that the 750th was on the horizon I suggested a new organ might be something with which we could mark the anniversary. We drew up a shortlist of four makers from Canada, America, Sweden and Britain, and Dobson Pipe Organ Builders of Lake City, Iowa, won. It was four years from the initial meeting with Dobson to the completion last November. It's their Opus 91 and their first instrument outside North America. What swung it in their favour was their response to the chapel in which the organ was to be located.'

The organ, comprising three manuals and 43 stops, is indeed a remarkable design with almost every detail reflecting the windows, carvings and arches in the chapel. After being shipped over to Liverpool in two sections, the construction in Merton College Chapel took only three and a half weeks. The voicing of the pipes took four months. Merton is not revealing the total cost but it will be a lot. Good organs are expensive. My alma mater is having to raise £150,000 for a modest three-manual affair to replace the one on which I took my first lessons all those years ago; the school was determined to retain a pipe organ rather than go for a cheaper digital alternative. In the church where I now play, we managed to install a new west-end extension section on the cheap (£37,000) only by sourcing three of the four ranks from a redundant instrument of the same make and vintage as the main organ; it took two years and a lot of hard work by many people to raise even that comparatively small amount. No wonder so many churches, when their instrument is allowed to fall into a state of disrepair, opt for the less expensive course and buy an electronic instrument. It's not only the best option from a financial point of view, but a better option than no organ at all. My local crematorium has a perfectly serviceable electric organ that is rarely used now. Depressingly, the rota of local organists has been replaced by a computer-controlled music system ('Media Solutions for Crematoria') that supplies a pre-recorded pipe organ and choir for the service. Over my dead body, when the time comes.

Let's hope it is not a pattern repeated in many other places. In reality, I don't think it will be, for there is a genuine affection for the organ. People simply like the whole idea of the thing



Benjamin Nicholas – who suggested that Merton College Chapel has a new organ

and are willing to put their hands in their pockets. Look no further than the most publicised project of recent years: the Royal Festival Hall's 1950s Harrison & Harrison organ has had a complete makeover costing £2.3m. £1m came from the National Lottery Fund; the remainder had to be found by fund-raising, and 60,000 members of the public contributed to the largest amount ever for any pipe organ in the UK.

Now the organ can be heard at full throttle for the first time since 2005 (only one-third has been operational since the completion of the hall's acoustic refurbishment in 2007). To celebrate the event, Southbank Centre is putting on an unprecedented organ festival, Pull Out All the Stops, which will, in the words of the Southbank Centre's head of classical music, Gillian Moore, 'celebrate the history of the organ and imagine the future

for it. School children, young composers, jazz musicians – all sorts of musicians, way beyond the niche audience for organ recitals – are very excited about the project. We are thrilled with the response. We've commissioned a piece from Kaija Saariaho to be conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen, another from Sir John Tavener, sadly no longer with us, and one for children and organ from Sir Peter Maxwell Davies.'

William McVicker, longtime curator of the Festival Hall's Harrison & Harrison, explains that the refurbishment involved making the organ shallower from front to back – more ergonomic in terms of the space

it occupies. 'It still has 103 stops and 7866 pipes and the voicing has not been changed. We've retained the visual aspect because, don't forget, it was one of the first to be built with an open plan design (almost all the pipes you see are speaking pipes), and we've preserved its unique tonal character.' The inaugural gala concert took place on March 18. Do go and hear it in its full glory if you get the chance.

Organists tend to be a fairly strait-laced bunch, conservative musically and sartorially. The maverick Cameron Carpenter, an admixture of Lang Lang and Liberace, in his tight white jeans and T-shirt, is no traditionalist when it comes to programming or presentation. But he brings in the punters. 'I have a duty to share my vision with an audience and I have to think of the best way of doing that. My passion is to make the organ an instrument on which I can do things that have never been done before. We must rise to the challenge as musicians and satisfy all humanity. That's why we are artists.'

Edwin Lemare might have said the same thing a century ago. Who knows – we might yet see audiences for organ recitals once again regularly queuing round the block. ☺

'The last 10 years have just been about discovering music'

The French weeklies may be most interested in Renaud Capuçon as a celebrity but as Caroline Gill finds out, the violinist is most happy simply being a musician

It's surprisingly tricky to get Renaud Capuçon onto the subject of celebrity. I've never been one for puff pieces (and have certainly never been called on to write one), but if there were ever a risk of going that way, it would be with Capuçon.

Darling of French weekly *Paris Match* and its relations, his private life has been invasively scrutinised in the years since he married his high-profile wife, the journalist Laurence Ferrari. Therefore, for the first time in my career, and slightly awkwardly, I feel I ought to ask about something other than the music before we can carry on. I feel a bit out of my depth, and worry about how he's going to react, but actually the way in which he spends almost no time at all on dismissing it in the nicest possible way, at the same time as making it seem as though he has given it absolutely as much time and attention as it deserves, gives a little insight into Capuçon himself.

'It is heavy, because it's not the life of a classical musician,' he sighs. 'But to be honest, we only had one tough year. The first thing is music, and I never got distracted, but I could feel it – my friends knew I wasn't changing, but people around in orchestras were waiting to see if I did. But now people see I'm the same, and in two words I can say it's a non-problem. Without being in that maelstrom I would still have done exactly the same things – the last 10 years have just been about discovering music.'

It sounds very much like he saw it as the waiting game it was – the pragmatic side of his personality accepted without rancour that there would be those who wanted to see whether he would give in to the hype and become a textbook 'celebrity'. And now, five years later, it seems unequivocal that any descent into self-absorption simply isn't going to happen. Aside from being particularly well groomed for a day when he's just 'hanging out' before his Wigmore Hall recital, the overwhelming impression he gives is of a musician with very little presumption. What there is, though, is a simmering positivity that is not only infectious, but which usually only comes from a sense of happy reconciliation with oneself.

'To be honest, we only had one tough year. The first thing is music, and I never got distracted'

He reminds me a bit of James Ehnes, and I say so. He immediately jumps on it with a big smile and says: 'It's so funny, but do you know that with James, we were born the same day, the same year? We are great friends – like brothers – and he's wonderful.'

He is also, like Ehnes, a prolific recording artist, and his discography runs to a list of 17 that amounts to an eclectic mix that is as much crowd-pleasing as it is challenging listening. It is a number that surprised him when he drew it up, and his new disc of Bach's first two violin concertos may not appear at first glance to be much of a departure. But it is certainly a big deal for all violinists to choose when to venture into recording Bach for the first time, and although it isn't a decision Capuçon took lightly, it wasn't a difficult one for him either.

'It's very strange, but when you hear the Menuhin recording from when he was 17, it's immaculate. I understand that he had to do it then. But there are other violinists who wait until they're 60. It's not sitting and planning: "ready" doesn't really mean anything. It's just knowing it's right,' he says, pinpointing the birth of his son as the moment when he stopped being so intimidated by the prospect of playing Bach (when he became very slightly 'désacraliser' or, 'at least, a bit more human').

Capuçon plays the fêted 'Panette' del Gesù violin of 1737 – played for a long time by Isaac Stern and made seven years after the second of the concertos was written. I ask him how an instrument that has the Brahms, Ravel and Dutilleux of his repertoire so easily within its grasp manages the transparent intricacies of Bach. 'The amazing power of this violin is that if you want a pure sound, it's there. If you know how to use the weight of the bow, you can change the sound – then you can play Bartók, or Beethoven or Bach.'

Serendipitously, these are similar reasons to those that led Capuçon to the Chamber Orchestra of Europe to record the concertos. Despite a long relationship with the group that dates back to the earliest stages of his solo career in 1999, it was their ability to play Baroque music on modern instruments with the

same purity and style as the best period performances that determined the terms of this particular musical agreement. 'I didn't want to record with Baroque strings or bow,' says Capuçon. 'I don't do it in general, so why start here? The COE just plays pure music.'

The perennial challenge for violinists of working out what to pair with Bach on a recording was in no way absent from this project, and the purity that Capuçon sought in the sound of the orchestra also held the key to the choosing a piece that could sit next to the concertos with its self-respect intact. Many performers deem it safest to combine Bach with more Bach and, as it happens, that was one plan for this recording – there was a suggestion of the Double Concerto made to Ehnes, although 'it's no secret that he wasn't free' – but Capuçon ultimately decided the disc needed something different, but of equal purity to the Bach. Pēteris Vasks's *Distant Light* manages exactly that: it sits easily with Capuçon's policy of 'recording one light piece, one shadow piece' at the same time as sending the listener in 'the same direction as the Bach.'

More abstract than Lutosławski or Penderecki, but with similar flashes of beauty, *Distant Light* was written in 1997 for Gidon Kremer, and represents a rare inroad into contemporary music for Capuçon. It's an imaginative and insightful pairing, and one that reflects the portfolio nature of a career that includes chamber music and artistic direction as well as extensive solo work. These are not strands it has been easy for him to combine, and he has recently inaugurated the Festival de Pâques, the second year of which will take place in Aix-en-Provence in April. With powerful and enthusiastic backers, it is something for which he has high hopes, but above all he is relishing the opportunity to collaborate with the musicians he respects and calls friends.

'It's a way of creating something,' he says, with feeling. 'I'm not a composer, so the way I can create is by programming.' Surely he doesn't think that his playing is not creative? 'Well, it is certainly always with the same goal – to bring people together.'

All the way through our interview, one gets the feeling that Capuçon is alive to the potentially corrosive influence of the modern day – of which he has such positive and negative experiences – on the music he seeks to serve with as much integrity as possible.

'It's like when you go to a restaurant and are served a soup that is a proper soup,' he says, with the most idiosyncratically French analogy you can imagine. 'One that is actually made with fresh vegetables, like I eat at my parents' house. My father brings them in from his garden; my mother cooks them. I have a mobile phone and an iPad, but also eat my parents' soup. When I play Bach of course we're supposed to know everything, but I just wanted to do something right. And if it's not, least it's honest.' ☀

► Capuçon's recording of Bach and Vask is reviewed on page 31



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Editor's Choice

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings reviewed in this issue



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Recording of the Month

David Threasher embraces a new approach to the Mozart Requiem we know and love



Mozart

Requiem, K626 (including reconstruction of first performance, December 10, 1791).

Misericordias Domini, K222

Joanne Lunn sop Rowan Hellier mez

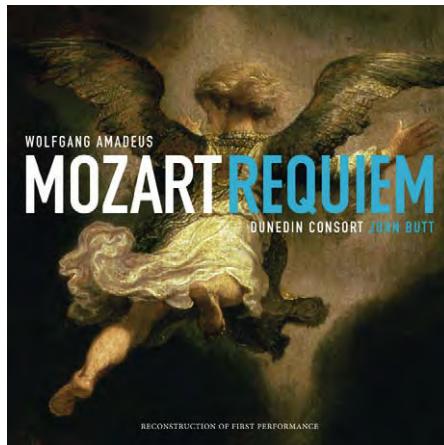
Thomas Hobbs ten Matthew Brook bass

Dunedin Consort / John Butt

Linn F CKD449 (62' • DDD • T/t). Also available as an MP3, CD Quality, Studio Master (96kHz) or Studio Master (192kHz) download

Purely on grounds of performance alone, this is one of the finest Mozart Requiems of recent years. John Butt brings to Mozart the microscopic care and musicological acumen that have made his Bach and Handel recordings so thought-provoking and satisfying.

As with all of Butt's recordings, however, this Mozart Requiem is something of an event. The occasion is the publication of a new edition – by David Black, a senior research fellow at Homerton College, Cambridge – of the 'traditional' completion of this tantalisingly unfinished work, of which this is the first recording. Süssmayr's much-maligned filling-in of the Requiem torso has lately enjoyed a resurgence in its acceptance by the scholarly community – not that it has ever been supplanted in the hearts and repertoires of choral societies and music lovers around the world. The vogue for stripped-back and reimagined modern completions is on the wane and Süssmayr's attempt, for all its perceived inconsistencies and inaccuracies, is once again in favour



'The effect is to wipe away the impression of a "thick, grey crust" that was felt so palpably by earlier commentators on the work'

in the crucible of musicological criticism. After all, as Black points out in the preface to his score, 'Whatever the shortcomings of Süssmayr's completion, it is the only document that may transmit otherwise lost directions or written material from Mozart'.

Black has returned to the earliest sources of the work: Mozart's incomplete 'working' score, Süssmayr's 'delivery' score and the first printed edition of 1800, which even so soon after the work's genesis was already manifesting accretions and errors that place us at a further remove from Mozart's intentions. For all the textual emendations this engenders, the actual difference as far as the general listener is concerned is

likely to be minimal; while we Requiemophiles quiver with delight at each clarified marking, to all intents and purposes what is presented here is *the* Mozart Requiem as it has been known and loved for more than two centuries.

It is Butt's minute attention to these details, though, that makes this such a thrilling performance. He fields a choir and band of dimensions similar to the forces at the first performance of the complete work on January 2, 1793, little over a year after Mozart's death, and the effect is, not unexpectedly, to wipe away the impression of a 'thick, grey crust' that was felt so palpably by earlier commentators on the work. Listen, for example, to Mozart's miraculous counterpoint at 'Te decet hymnus' in the Introit or Süssmayr's rather more clumsy imitation in the 'Recordare', and hear how refreshingly the air circulates around these potentially stifling textures.

Butt's outlook on the work is apparent from the very beginning: the gait of the string quavers is more deliberate than limping in the first bar, and this purposefulness returns in movements such as the 'Recordare' and 'Hostias'. The extremes of monumentality and meditativeness in the Requiem are represented perhaps by Bernstein and Herreweghe respectively; Butt steers a course equidistant between the two without compromising the work in its many moments of austerity or repose. Paradoxically, Butt's fidelity to the



Reconstructing Mozart: the slimmed-down Dunedin Consort and John Butt recording at Greyfriars Kirk, Edinburgh

minutiae of the score allows him the freedom to shape a performance of remarkable cumulative intensity, so that the drama initiated in the driving ‘Dies iiae’ reaches a climax and catharsis in the ‘Lacrimosa’ and is recalled in the turbulent *Agnus Dei*.

The choir is of only 16 voices, from which the four soloists step out as required. Blend and tuning are of an accuracy all too rarely heard, even in this golden age of British

choral singing. Soprano Joanne Lunn’s tone is well nourished, with vibrato deployed judiciously to colour selected notes or phrases; of the other soloists, Matthew Brook’s bass responds sonorously to the sounding of the last trumpet (in German ‘die letzte Posaune’ – the last trombone) in the ‘Tuba mirum’. Instrumental sonority, too, is meticulously judged: hear especially the voicing of the brass-and-wind chords during bridge passages in the ‘Benedictus’

or the shifting orchestral perspectives of the ‘Confutatis’.

The couplings are also carefully considered. The first is *Misericordias Domini*, an offertory composed in 1775 of which Mozart had a set of parts copied in 1791. Sharing with the Requiem its key and a gleeful exploitation of contrapuntal techniques, it piquantly demonstrates the advance in Mozart’s church style during the last 16 years of his life.

The disc closes with what purports to be a re-enactment of an even earlier ‘first performance’ of the Requiem. While the 1793 Vienna concert is well documented, recent research has suggested that the Requiem (or at least some of it) was performed in a memorial to Mozart on December 10, 1791 – only five days after his death. Given the partial state of the work (only the Introit was complete in Mozart’s hand), it is supposed that this performance consisted of the Introit and the ensuing *Kyrie* fugue, for which an amanuensis filled in the doubling woodwind parts. That performance is hypothesised here with slimmed-down vocal and string parts, and with trumpets and drums missing from the *Kyrie* (on the presumption that the parts hadn’t been provided by that time). Starker still than the larger performance, this telling appendix offers a tantalising glimpse of the music that might have been played by Mozart’s friends and students as they struggled to come to terms with their loss. **G**

Requiem – selected comparisons:

Bernstein (10/89) (DG) 427 353-2GH, 474 170-2GEN,

477 6697GB6 or 477 9996GM2

Herreweghe (5/97) (HARM) HMC90 1620



Visit the Gramophone Player at gramophone.co.uk to hear an excerpt from this issue's Recording of the Month

Listening points Your guide to the disc’s memorable moments

Track 1: Requiem, K626 - Introit

The only movement wholly completed by Mozart. Listen to the clarity of the winding contrapuntal accompaniment as the soprano soloist intones the plainchant melody (from 1'52") and again when the choir rejoin (2'21"). Compare, too, the *forte* entry of the trombones (0'37") with the *piano* trumpets and drums at the end of the movement (4'18"), leading expectantly into the *Kyrie*.

Track 6: Requiem, K626 - Recordare

Mozart’s exquisitely wrought four-part counterpoint from about 0'14" shows up Süssmayr’s less considered attempt from around 1'38". The wonderful clearness of the performance and recording maintains the contrast but goes some way towards disentangling

the somewhat more muddled lines of Süssmayr’s ‘imitation Mozart’.

Track 13: Requiem, K626 - Benedictus

Dismissed by some as entirely the work of Süssmayr (and with a handful of curious solecisms uncharacteristic of Mozart), there is clearly, nevertheless, a notable sonic imagination at work in the creation of this movement: hear especially the stentorian chords as wind and full brass combine (at 1'32" and again at 4'25"), echoing similar moments in the Introit.

Track 17: Misericordias Domini, K222

Dating from 16 years before the Requiem, this offertory is linked to an early memorial service for

Mozart. It shares with the Requiem its key of D minor and its compendious exploitation of contrapuntal techniques – and has a second subject (first heard at 0'59") that foreshadows the contours of Beethoven’s ‘Ode to Joy’.

Track 19: Requiem - Kyrie

The version of the Requiem heard at that memorial perhaps consisted only of the complete Introit and a version of the *Kyrie* with Mozart’s vocal and bass parts, plus doubling winds hurriedly supplied by an amanuensis, but supposedly no trumpets or drums – parts which would need to have been composed rather than simply copied. Choir and strings are reduced (as seen in the picture above), resulting in yet further asperity of sound.

Orchestral



Guy Rickards delights in the latest Pettersson disc from Norrköping:

Pettersson's need to communicate had a ferocity unmatched by any composer since Beethoven' ▶ **REVIEW ON PAGE 37**



David Threasher on Schumann from Yannick Nézet-Séguin:

'Readings that offer ample quantities of intellect and intuitiveness - head and heart'

▶ **REVIEW ON PAGE 40**

Andreae

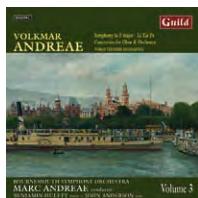
Symphony. Li-Tai-Pe, Op 37^a. Concertino^b

^aBenjamin Hulett ten ^bJohn Anderson ob

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra /

Marc Andreeae

Guild ® GMCD7400 (79' • DDD • T/T)



This Guild series devoted to the Swiss conductor-composer Volkmar Andreeae

(1879-1962) is proving so comprehensive that it's not always easy to discern the wood from the trees. It would be easy to overlook the modest Concertino (1941) tucked away at the end of this disc and assume that the main event must be the large-scale Symphony (1898-1900). In fact that piece turns out to be an impersonal student exercise. While its craftsmanship is never in doubt, Brahms looms so large that its revival feels redundant. The composition predates Andreeae's life-changing encounter with Bruckner's Third Symphony under the baton of Richard Strauss.

Andreeae composed his *Li-Tai-Pe* songs in 1930-31, his spare use of a relatively large orchestra presenting the first of several parallels with Gustav Mahler. Hans Bethge's translations of the poet he called Li-Po were among those which inspired *Das Lied von der Erde* and it was Julius Patzak, a noted interpreter of the Mahler, who gave the first performance of Andreeae's cycle. Benjamin Hulett has a suitably fresh and elegant voice with a more pronounced vibrato than common in his English tenor peer group.

Better still, in its way, is Andreeae's unpretentious Concertino, completed in 1941. The opening goes particularly well, John Anderson's solo line keening atmospherically over brooding string chords that sound surprisingly contemporary, somewhere between VW's Oboe Concerto and a Thomas Newman film score. The harmony quickly becomes more orthodox, there's a puckish middle section and the gentler mood returns.

Perhaps the finale succumbs a little too readily to conventional light-music bustle; the second movement offers more distinctive folkish invention. Strauss subsequently had his own Oboe Concerto premiered by the same soloist, Marcel Saitlet, but there's no reason why its burbling nostalgia should not occasionally be stilled in favour of Andreeae's oddly English-sounding idyll. Its scoring has a distinctly un-Germanic clarity and reticence. Presumably he directed Debussy as well as Bruckner during his 43-year Zurich tenure.

The performances are assured, the sound good and the annotations detailed, with texts and translations provided. Marc Andreeae is the composer-conductor's grandson, and he does a fine job.

David Gutman

JS Bach

Brandenburg Concertos, BWV1046-1051

Freiburg Baroque Orchestra

Harmonia Mundi ® ② HMC90 2176/7 (90' • DDD)



The *Brandenburgs* are billed here as music 'open as ever to new historically informed interpretations, as this set demonstrates', so the prospect is veritably tantalising – especially when combined with the kind of state-of-the-art executancy that the Freiburgers have made their own. Indeed, an uncanny sense of corporate cohesion (as close to the world of the finest symphony orchestras as you'll find in large-scale Baroque playing) yields luxuriant textures, polished ensemble and meticulously plotted conceptions, born of single-mindedness and an embedded familiarity with their colleagues and the material.

A delight in shifting attention over the complete canvases, whether passing the baton rapidly from violins to horns and then to continuo in the First Concerto, or a wondrous fleetness and pithy warmth in the chuckling and brilliant violas in the

Sixth Concerto, consumes the music's rhetorical energy. This is serious music-making but, far from challenging the heartland of generic *Brandenburg* interpretation as claimed, the Freiburgers in fact consolidate the sounds, values and habits which have remained fairly constant with them for over 20 years.

We hear the kind of sweet-toned, resonant ensemble and collective *raison d'être* in the Third Concerto that defined the group's Orchestral Suites (1/12), and the last movements of the Fifth and Sixth are delights predicated on sublime solo interaction rather than questing dialogues. Likewise the slow movements, such as in the Second, are effective in projecting a conceit of studied world-weariness: nothing new from several other leading versions (such as Pinnock, Gardiner and Butt) but often performed with just a little more tonal panache and identifiable precision.

As one progresses through the more virtuoso movements, in the Second, Fourth and Fifth Concertos, admiration for these peerlessly ambitious works remains undiminished and one suspects that this will satisfy many, given the level of playing here. On the debit side, there is a dogged joylessness in the study-like last movement of the Third, something of the same in the outer movements of the Second and a driven pedantry in the first movement of the Fifth. One gets a flavour of this early on with an unsmiling courtliness in the dances of the First and it gathers a degree of momentum as the set continues.

Only a true curmudgeon, though, would deny that there is joy to be had in the technical and prime musical accomplishment here but there is more spontaneous colour, character, vulnerability and emotional risk in the three aforementioned versions; and that – and variety within – counts for more, especially on repeated listening. A curate's egg of a *Brandenburg*.

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood

Selected comparisons:

European Brandenburg Ens, Pinnock (3/08) (AVIE) AV2119

EBS, Gardiner (1/10) (SDG) SDG707

Dunedin Consort, Butt (4/13) (LINN) CKD430

JS Bach · Vasks

'Distant Light'

JS Bach Violin Concertos – BWV1041; BWV1042
Vasks Violin Concerto, 'Distant Light'
Chamber Orchestra of Europe / Renaud Capuçon vn
 Erato (F) 2564 63232-2 (60' • DDD)



The name of Renaud Capuçon is not the first that would spring to mind when

searching for recordings of Bach's violin concertos, even though I learn from the information enclosed with this pre-release copy that the A minor was the first concerto he ever played. The approach is a happy medium: Capuçon is clearly aware of the lessons in articulation to be learnt from historically informed performance, but never sounds exaggerated and never throws caution to the winds in terms of speed. The performances nevertheless flow very well (the first movement of BWV1042 is particularly fine); and while I do not imagine that I shall be returning to them very often, they are likely to prove very satisfactory to those wary of the orchestral behemoth and the excesses of what we used to call 'authenticity' alike.

It is the Vasks that provides the real meat here. While the work has already been recorded outstandingly by Kremer and Storgård (Teldec, 10/99), Capuçon really does have something to say. There is a sense of complicity with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe (he is directing as well as playing) that brings the work alive in a way that can only be described as electric. There is nowhere to hide in Vasks's music; it is stripped to the minimum, but that is what gives it its power. Both orchestra and soloist understand this absolutely, and there is no sense ever of over-interpreting the music, though Capuçon has a wonderful sense of line, following the direction of every melody or melodic tag unflaggingly. The music is allowed to breathe, given space, and the sound is thus at once intimate and vast (and also beautifully captured). If you are looking for a recording of the Vasks, this is the one to buy.

Ivan Moody

Bartók · Enescu

Bartók Divertimento, Sz 113 **Enescu** Symphonie concertante, Op 8^a. Intermezzo, Op 12
„Laura Buruiana vc National Chamber Orchestra of Moldova / Cristian Florea Ollecello Classics (F) OLC001 (54' • DDD)



If there's one significant composer who needs a little help from his friends, it's George Enescu. And by 'friends' I mean interpreters who know how to shape and mould a phrase (Foster, Georgescu and the like) and recording engineers with a good ear for what's going on in the orchestra, which in Enescu's case is, for much of the time, a good deal. Fail on those two fronts and the music seems merely to meander.

Generally speaking I prefer Laura Buruiana's cello-playing to that of Valentin Arcu with the Romanian Radio and Television Orchestra (Marco Polo – now download-only). But where the latter recording scores is in liberating some of the bigger climaxes and focusing Enescu's accompanying lines with marginally more clarity. Neither orchestra is exactly of the front rank but for some of the time the National Chamber Orchestra of Moldova on the current release seems to be feeling its way. Best of all is Alban Gerhardt with the BBC Scottish Symphony under Carlos Kalmar (Hyperion), a more secure production on all fronts, with some superb playing from Gerhardt.

The quietly colourful little Intermezzo, Op 12, is better served but when it comes to the CD's main course, Bartók's Divertimento, technical and interpretative shortcomings get in the way. It's mostly a question of balance, the foreground quartet tending to shift focus, and while Cristian Florea clearly has a view of the piece (the finale's humour, for example), his orchestra isn't quite up to realising it. Bite is conspicuous by its absence, although the growling spectres that dominate the *Molto adagio* seem real enough. But turn to any number of rivals for comparison – Fischer, Boulez, Skrowaczewski, Solti, Dorati, Barshai, Wolf and so on – and the shortcomings of this recording become obvious. No point in saying much more, save that if the often attractive *Symphonie concertante* is your main priority, it's Gerhardt and Kalmar all the way. Rob Cowan

Sym concertante – selected comparison:
 Arcu, Romanian Rad & TV Orch, Conta
 (MARC) ▶ 8 223141
 Gerhardt, BBC Scottish SO, Kalmar (HYPE) CDA67544

Beethoven · Mozart

Beethoven Piano Concerto No 3, Op 37
Mozart Piano Concerto No 24, K491
Yevgeny Sudbin pf
Minnesota Orchestra / Osmo Vänskä
 BIS (F) BIS1978 (66' • DDD/DSD)



Even if the catalogue was in a less parlous state than it currently is where recordings of Beethoven's Third Piano Concerto are concerned, this newest addition to Yevgeny Sudbin's Beethoven cycle with Osmo Vänskä and the Minnesota Orchestra would be a thing to wonder at.

Bryce Morrison has written of 'the mother-of-pearl sheen' of Sudbin's pianism. In none of the five concertos is fineness of touch more a *sine qua non* than in the fantasy-strewn and yet oddly elusive Third Concerto. Solomon has this quality in his still fresh-sounding 1956 HMV recording, as did Gilels, whose technical and imaginative mastery of the work Sudbin to some extent shares. Gilels was reliably partnered in the studio by Cluytens (11/54 – nla) and Szell (12/70 – nla). Neither collaboration, however, was on a par with what we have here from Vänskä and his Minnesota players, where the marriage of strength in exposition and sensitivity in accompaniment is more or less beyond compare.

The shaping of the concerto is well-nigh ideal. The first movement has pace and presence, out of which larger vistas naturally emerge; the great slow movement is rapt without in any sense being static; the finale is wonderfully crisp and gamesome. As befits the performance's general sense of focus and discipline, Beethoven's own cadenzas are used. The recorded quality is exceptional.

Would all was as well with the performance of Mozart's C minor Concerto, a work which Beethoven himself greatly revered. Vänskä takes what in context is a suitably Beethovenish view of the music but overall there is little real meeting of minds here. In the first movement Vänskä drives and (given half a chance) Sudbin dreams – until, that is, Sudbin lets fly with a tempestuous cadenza of his own devising. This is as structurally and stylistically at odds with Mozart's long and richly worked first movement as the cadenzas deployed by Curzon (a nicely judged essay by Marius Flothuis), Kempff, and the contrapuntally minded Brendel are not. In much the same way, the ornamentation which Sudbin chooses to add to the simple-seeming *Larghetto* is curiously banal; after which he gives a decidedly unburdened account of the predominantly minor-key finale. Here it is not the refinement of the playing which is in question. What is lacking is

concentration of effect during Mozart's emotionally charged traversal of the eight variations and coda.

To half-quote Dickens, this is the best of discs and the worst of discs, wisdom in Beethoven and in Mozart folly. But, rest assured, the Beethoven is not to be missed.

Richard Osborne

Beethoven – selected comparisons:

Solomon, Philib Orch, Menges

(7/58^R, 3/02) (TEST) SBT1220

Gilels, New Philib Orch, Boult (6/11) (ICA) ICAC5000

Mozart – selected comparisons:

Solomon, Philib Orch, Menges

(1/56^R, 2/02) (TEST) SBT1222

Kempff, Bamberg SO, Leitner (1/61^R)

(DG) 457 759-2GOR; (3/14) (ELOQ) 480 6645

Brendel, ASMF, Marriner

(8/75^R, 10/94) (DECC) 478 2695DB12

Curzon, Bavarian RSO, Kubelik (AUDI) AUDITE95 453

Berlioz • Varèse

Berlioz Symphonie fantastique, Op 14^a

Varèse Ionisation^b

Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra /

Mariss Jansons

BR-Klassik Ⓜ 900121 (62' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Philharmonie im Gasteig, Munich, ^bJuly 1 & 2, 2010; ^aMarch 7 & 8, 2013



Berlioz's symphonic summit between Dionysus and Apollo has always posed its interpreters problems. Even in the face of much formidable competition I have always thought that Sir Colin Davis's 1974 Concertgebouw recording strikes a fine balance between Mendelssohnian gracefulness and the beckoning later Romantics, fanning the flames without spoiling the form. This Bavarian Radio Symphony concert recording under Mariss Jansons (there is applause at the end but if you're allergic there's a long enough gap before it to pause the CD) presents a performance this is svelte, energetic, dynamically shaped and bereft of repeats in the first and fourth movements (Davis plays both).

The sound quality has impressive warmth: the surge and swell of the first movement, with its unnerving modulations, is reported with presence and clarity. The 'Scène aux champs' is charged with atmosphere and I suppose my only real disappointment – aside from those missing repeats – is the 'Songe d'une nuit du Sabbat', which wants for demonic attack. Controlled rather than cathartic is how I'd describe it, although the sudden surge of energy at the end is undeniably exciting.

A good performance then, great to witness live but in spite of its musical virtues less than comparable with, among many others, Munch, Abbado, Norrington and above all that '74 Davis recording. But there is the fill-up, all six and a half minutes of it, and if you're willing to shell out above the odds for what's just about the finest available version of Varèse's stealthy, foot-tapping all-percussion *Ionisation* – as much a culture shock in 1933 as Berlioz's *Symphonie* had been a century or so earlier – then you're in luck. *Ionisation* is a dapper slice of post-futurism, top hat cocked forwards as it shuffles furtively to the wailing of a siren and imaginatively deployed assorted percussion. Jansons keeps her steady as she goes and the recorded balance is well-nigh perfect. So if the Varèse is your priority, I wouldn't hesitate. Otherwise, look elsewhere.

Rob Cowan

Selected comparisons:

Boston SO, Munch (10/56^R) (RCA) 82876 87392-2

Concertgebouw Orch, C Davis (3/75^R, 8/01^R) (PHIL)

475 7557DOR or (PENT) PTC5186 184

Chicago SO, Abbado (5/84^R) (DG) 474 165-2GEN

Stuttgart RSO, Norrington (1/05) (HANS)

CD93 103, CD 94 614 or CD 93 313

Brahms • Chausson • Debussy

Brahms Symphony No 3, Op 90 Chausson

Poème de l'amour et de la mer, Op 19 – La mort de l'amour – le temps de lilas^a **Debussy** La mer

^aJanet Baker *mez*

London Symphony Orchestra / Evgeni Svetlanov

ICA Classics Ⓜ ICAC5123 (73' • ADD)

Recorded live at the Royal Festival Hall, London, April 17, 1975

^aFrom BBC Legends BBCL4077-2 (3/02)



With all of the recordings of the Brahms and Debussy pieces, might the main attraction here be Janet Baker? No. The full Chausson title (*Poème de l'amour et de la mer*) isn't listed more prominently because the piece is only excerpted in the form of a bonus track, since it was part of the live 1975 programme recorded here, previously released in full on BBC Legends. So this is yet another instalment in the growing live discography of Evgeni Svetlanov with non-Soviet (and more polished) ensembles. I've yet to hear anything that equalled the late-in-life live encounters I heard from him on tour but this is a formidable example of who Svetlanov was.

The LSO weren't in their absolute sturdiest form in the Brahms performance,

which nonetheless has distinctive qualities, though ones best caught on headphones. The architectural basics are well accounted for in a cogent interpretation whose tempi don't veer anywhere close to extremes. The middle movements often have a dreamy, gossamer quality and are skilfully built in ways such that the thematic material is revisited with an ever-progressing escalation of meaning.

Similar to the Brahms, the Debussy has its moments of ragged chord tunings in many of the usual places. Also the intoxicating piling-on of sonorities was probably best appreciated in the concert hall (and, judging from the audience reaction, appreciated greatly). As it stands in this 1975 taping, Svetlanov brought no distinctive sonority to the piece but brings the first and third movements to thrilling conclusions by favouring percussion and breaking with his usual moderate tempi (awestruck slowness in the first movement; frenetically fast in the third). The all-too-briefly heard Baker has a bit of brittleness in her voice, giving it all the more character amid her typically shamanistic relationship with the words and a sense of abandon not often heard in her studio recordings.

David Patrick Stearns

Braunfels

Piano Concerto, Op 21^a. Ariels Gesang, Op 18.

Schottische Phantasie, Op 47^b

^aSarah-Jane Bradley va ^aVictor Sangiorgio pf

BBC Concert Orchestra / Johannes Wildner

Dutton Epoch Ⓜ CDLX7304 (76' • DDD)



The music of Walter Braunfels (1882–1954), half-Jewish and ardently Catholic, disappeared from view in the middle of the last century, initially for reasons of ethnic chauvinism, later because his idiom seemed out of kilter with the progressive ethos of the times. Unlike Franz Schreker or Erich Wolfgang Korngold, he has as much in common with Hans Pfitzner, an early mentor, as with the more radical kind of Richard Strauss. And, while more and more of his output is being revived today, nothing seems to have quite the freshness of the opera *Die Vögel* ('The Birds'), Braunfels's greatest hit. That's where newcomers would be well advised to start. The work is available as an audio download with Lothar Zagrosek conducting, part of the legendary Entartete Musik series (Decca, 4/97), or better still on DVD and Blu-ray in a staging by the Los Angeles Opera under James Conlon (ArtHaus).

The present coupling, a typically audacious offering from one of our most adventurous labels, will delight readers attracted by expertly crafted late-Romantic fare, without dispelling the suspicion that Braunfels might have been a more interesting composer had he been prepared to admit a modicum of 'degeneracy'. There's more chromaticism in the relatively downbeat *Schottische Phantasie* of 1932-33 than in the heroic, frequently Brahmsian Piano Concerto of 1910-11. There it's as if *Salome* never happened.

Is Braunfels's thematic invention strong enough to animate his extended structures? Possibly not, yet his music can still be rich and appealing enough for home listening. The composer was an accomplished pianist and his technically demanding Piano Concerto is well served by its Australian soloist. The opening promises much with its cinematic sweep and the slow movement has genuine breadth and nobility; it's a pity the music runs out of steam in the meandering cyclical finale. A pleasure, however, to re-encounter the artistry of Sarah-Jane Bradley even in the less immediately assimilable *Schottische Phantasie*. Its unlikely wellspring is 'Ca' the yowes' – the folksong famously adapted by Robert Burns. Braunfels turned to Shakespeare for *Ariels Gesang* (1910), a deliberately elusive, purely orchestral tone-poem placed here between the bigger utterances. Delicate and often rather lovely, it poses fewer problems of balance than its companions, whose orchestral textures boast range and body without the *n*th degree of clarity. There are full notes by Jürgen Schaarwächter. **David Gutman**

Bruckner

Symphony No 9 (1894 version)

Berne Symphony Orchestra / Mario Venzago

CPO (F) CPO777 787-2 (52' • DDD)



Mario Venzago's vision of a leaner, trimmer Bruckner – with big-boned solemnity discreetly airbrushed away – aims to repoint the composer by balancing his Wagner fixation against his symphonic roots in Schubert. And there's nothing wrong with that. Venzago's booklet-notes add up to a spirited personal manifesto for what he terms this 'Different Bruckner', and they make for an inspiring read.

But consider this. If you were to hear his Bruckner Ninth without any prior knowledge of Venzago's *Weltanschauung*, what would you think? Top of your list of

questions might be why a conductor would chose a high-velocity tempo for the *Scherzo*, a tempo that saddles the music with a taciturn, mechanistic quality while leaving the strings scrambling to articulate Bruckner's *pizzicato* quavers. 'How sprightly the movement now seems, dancing jauntily only to transform the buoyant Ländler every now and then into a hissing *danse infernale*', Venzago contends. And having typed those supremely self-confident words, surely I'm missing something? But no. I've just listened to the *Scherzo* again and this playing feels uncomfortable in its skin, not so much sprightly as decidedly jerky, like a Thunderbirds puppet.

Whatever criticism one makes, Venzago has his retorts and statistics prepped and waiting to go. As we all know, 63 per cent of statistics are statistically dubious and Venzago's point about Bruckner's *Scherzo* and accents – that, like Schubert, he wasn't sparing of accents, and that 'practically every note in the *Scherzo* has an accent mark...but it is absurd to conclude that every note should receive equal emphasis' – is, I would submit, a rather sweeping generalisation. The well-heeled Berne strings and the shrewd plotting of Venzago's first movement are undeniably impressive. But, after that *Scherzo* comedown, his *Adagio* feels aloof and micromanaged, as if Venzago can never really allow himself down deep into the thick of things.

And that this most revisionist of Bruckner conductors should duck the finale question – which since Rattle's 2012 recording of the Samale/Phillips/Cohrs/Mazzuca completion is a question that ought not to be dodged – is disappointing. A forthcoming appendix CD will apparently mop up the various finale possibilities, although I'd rather he'd taken a decisive view. I've just re-listened to Rattle's *Scherzo*. It's speedy, like Venzago's, but Bruckner's material is given scope to breathe and, unlike Venzago, Rattle's canny nuances of phrasing and timbre beam with conductorly pride. Venzago has plenty to say about Bruckner's Ninth; but theories remain theories unless something happens in sound.

Philip Clark

Selected comparison:

BPO, Rattle (8/12) (EMI) 952969-2

Dessner · Greenwood

Dessner St Carolyn by the Sea. Lachrimae.

Raphael **Greenwood** There Will Be Blood – Suite Copenhagen Phil / André de Ridder

DG (F) 479 2388GH; (F) ② (C) 479 2700GH
(64' • DDD)

Veronika Böhmová
Piano Works
Stravinsky / Prokofiev

Vivat Tango – Piazzolla / Bragato / Galliano
Ladislav Horák – accordion
Petr Nouzovsky – cello

Jan Klusák – Inventions
PKF – Prague Philharmonia,
Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra etc.

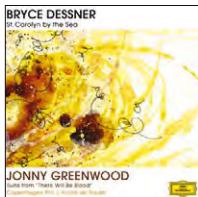
Dagmar Pecková – Dreams
Mahler / Wagner / Berio / Brahms
PKF – Prague Philharmonia, Jiří Bělohlávek

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The incidence of composers at home in both classical and rock genres is hardly a recent phenomenon, yet the ease with which numerous present-day figures on both sides of the Atlantic constantly make the transition renders this categorisation all but pointless. One such is Richard Reed Parry from Canadian band Arcade Fire, while another is Bryce Dessner – guitarist with US band The National, whose visceral and distinctive brand of ‘cosmic Americana’ is evident throughout the three orchestral works heard on this disc.

With its inspiration in Jack Kerouac’s novel *Big Sur*, *St Carolyn by the Sea* suffuses its harmonic richness with a long-term rhythmic momentum – minimalist in style if not in substance – redolent of Reich’s brief involvement with orchestral writing in the 1980s. *Lachrymae* draws on the piece of that name by Dowland, though works for strings by Britten and Bartók are also points of reference behind a piece whose gradual intensifying of mood does not undermine its essential poise. Most arresting here is *Raphael*, where Dessner’s electric lead – lucid and scintillating by turn – is the focal point across music whose increasingly combative manner is tellingly curtailed prior to a speculative close.

Music such as this demands a committed and focused response, which it receives from the Copenhagen forces under the expert direction of André de Ridder. The suite from Jonny Greenwood’s Academy-nominated score to *There Will Be Blood* is no mere fill-up. Its six movements draw on those salient qualities of the original soundtrack (available on Nonesuch), pointing up the often plangent timbral and textural contrasts which make the Radiohead guitarist’s music apposite to Paul Thomas Anderson’s epic fable of disillusion. Both composers benefit from suitably ‘wide-screen’ sound, setting the seal on a release that suggests DG has at last tapped a potent seam in today’s alternative new music scene.

Richard Whitehouse

Dvořák

Symphony No 6, Op 60 B112.

The Water Goblin, Op 107 B195

Nuremberg State Philharmonic Orchestra /

Marcus Bosch

Coviello F COV31316 (64' • DDD)

Recorded live



I’ve reviewed in the last two or three years and, as with Gerard Schwarz, José Serebrier and Marin Alsop, Marcus Bosch observes the important first-movement exposition repeat which, as I wrote when reviewing the Alsop recording, allows us access to a beautiful bridge passage (into the repeat) that would otherwise have remained mute on the page of the score.

Interesting that where Serebrier broadens slightly as he approaches the first big climax, Bosch hungrily pushes the tempo, a signal that his will be a keen-eared, bushy-tailed production, light on its feet and as lyrical as it’s breezily energetic. Though not exactly the most refined band in this music, the Nuremberg State Philharmonic manage some lovely moments, one in particular occurring 7'01" into the *Adagio*, where, tailing the woodwinds, the violins enter quietly and expressively with their statement of the principal theme. The *Scherzo* has plenty of gusto, though I miss the exciting timpani detail present on Kubelík’s Berlin recording, and I like the way Bosch cues a really quiet opening to the finale, the string and woodwind choirs beautifully balanced. Again, as the going heats up, so does the tempo, but the contrast soon levels off. *The Water Goblin* is vividly played, the very opening reversing what we usually hear by keeping the flutes and clarinets in the background while the accompanying instruments (violins, violas) take prominence, not an option I would want to hear too often but interesting nonetheless (the flutes are marked *piano mezza voce*, the other instruments *pianissimo*).

As to the rivals (for the symphony), Serebrier generously offers the sun-drenched Third Symphony but on Schwarz’s disc you have Janáček’s youthful *Idyll* for strings – a really beautiful work, as I’ve said before redolent at times of Dvořák, at other times of Tchaikovsky, and an effective showcase for the Seattle strings. Among digital options in the Sixth either Serebrier or Schwarz would prove preferable but Bosch’s unforced spontaneity in both works has a lot going for it. **Rob Cowan**

Selected comparisons:

BPO, Kubelík (10/73^R) (DG) 463 158-2GB6

Baltimore SO, Alsop (12/10) (NAXO) 8 570995

Bournemouth SO, Serebrier (1/13) (WARN) 2564 65775-3

Seattle SO, Schwarz (2/13) (NAXO) 8 572698

Foulds

‘Orchestral Music, Vol 3’

Undine, Op 3. *Kashmiri Boat Song*.

Chinese Suite, Op 95. *A Gaelic*

Dream-Song, Op 68. *Basque Serenade*.

Kashmiri Wedding Procession. *Miniature Suite*, Op 38. *Scène picaresque* (Spanish Serenade). *Gipsy Czárás* (Tzigeuner).

Kashmiri Boat Song on *Jhelum River*

BBC Concert Orchestra / Ronald Corp

Dutton Epoch M CDLX7307 (78' • DDD)



Both previous instalments in this valuable series (reviewed by Edward

Greenfield in 11/10 and 4/11) boasted more than their fair share of gems, and much the same applies to this newcomer. The programme begins with the three-movement orchestral suite *Undine* that Foulds wrote in 1898 when he was just 17, and I for one can certainly endorse annotator Malcolm MacDonald’s shrewd observation that the teenager ‘handles the orchestra with instinctive flair, alive to the properties of every timbre...there are already characteristic gestures that would recur in Foulds’s later music’. The mood of piquant, fairy-tale charm extends to the *Miniature Suite* of 1913, whose four movements derive from Foulds’s sizeable incidental score to Harold Chapin’s Christmas play for children entitled *Wonderful Grandmama and the Wand of Youth* (premiered at Manchester’s Gaiety Theatre on Boxing Day 1912). Completed in 1935, the *Chinese Suite* also comprises an enjoyable discovery, with its strongly pentatonic idiom and colourful use of tuned percussion (try the third movement, ‘Procession to the Temple of Heaven’).

Elsewhere, *A Gaelic Dream-Song* (1922) emerges as a fetching cousin to Foulds’s popular *Keltic Lament* (1911), whereas the 1935 *Gipsy Czárás* cribs quite outrageously from Brahms and Liszt – no wonder it was written under the pseudonym of Karl Kotschka. Rather more palatable are the *Scène picaresque* and *Basque Serenade*, though perhaps the most hauntingly original invention on the entire disc can be found in the three Kashmiri-inspired miniatures (*Boat Song*, *Wedding Procession* and *Boat Song on Jhelum River*) that Foulds penned between 1936 and 1938 after he and his family had moved to India.

Lively, affectionate-sounding performances under Ronald Corp’s sympathetic direction have been pleasingly captured by the Dutton microphones.

Andrew Achenbach

Grieg · Schumann

Grieg Piano Concerto, Op 16
Schumann Piano Concerto, Op 54
Janne Mertanen pf
Gävle Symphony Orchestra / Hannu Koivula
 Alba (F) ABCD356 (61' • DDD)



The coupling of the Grieg and Schumann piano concertos was long dominated by the virtually ideal partnership of Stephen Kovacevich and Colin Davis; a new pairing arrived when Leif Ove Andsnes was joined by the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra under Mariss Jansons, which had the advantage of more modern sound. But, like Andsnes, Janne Mertanen's bravura is also commanding, as, more importantly, are his tenderness and spontaneous poetic response. This certainly applies in the very familiar Grieg work, with sparkling outer movements and a touching Nordic *Adagio*.

The Gävle Symphony Orchestra conducted by Hannu Koivula also play gloriously and have an initial advantage in that the recording is multichannel, warm, full and very well balanced, with a truthful piano image, which applies whether one

plays the disc on SACD equipment or an ordinary stereo system. There is also an excellent note by Bryce Morrison, who offers historical background but also ventures an opinion on the quality of the Schumann performance. He suggests an assessment, with which I fully agree (and which I hope he won't mind me quoting), that the partnership of Mertanen, Koivula and this fine orchestra 'is filled with a sense of wonder, of first love. Everything is given with a living and breathing romantic impulse, is essentially "live", and you will sense a special warmth and spontaneity from Janne Mertanen.'

The first movement is certainly fully romantic, the playing is freshly poetic, the 'question and answer' Intermezzo is also most delicately played and the finale has great zest and unforced virtuosity. Incidentally, the engaging little theme that reappears in that last movement (written across the bar-lines), is played with an attractively unforced, bouncing lift. All in all, this is a most impressive new arrival and maybe a first choice for many, although Andsnes is perhaps not surpassed. **Ivan March**
Selected comparisons – coupled as above:

Kovacevich, BBC SO, C Davis (3/72^R, 10/86^R, 6/96)

(PHIL) ▶ 464 702-2PM or 475 7773POR

Andsnes, BPO, Jansons (11/03^R) (EMI) 503419-2

Handel · Connexion

Connexion Concertino pour piano
Handel Organ Concertos – Op 4, HWV289-294;
 Op 7, HWV306-311; HWV296a
Ragna Schirmer fp/pf/hammond org with
Halle Handel Festival Orchestra / Bernhard Forck;
DaCuore / Andreas Seidel; various musicians /
Stefan Malzew
 Berlin Classics (M) ③ 0300554BC (3h 39' • DDD)

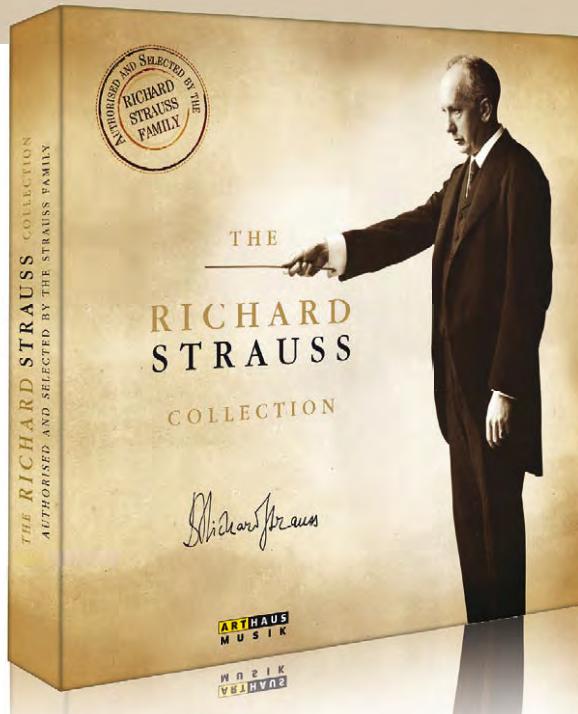


Recently I was introduced to Handel's life-affirming Op 4 Organ Concertos played on a modern concert grand (2/14). Now, like the No 6 bus, along comes a three-disc set of Opp 4 and 7. Here, though, most of Op 4 is played on a fortepiano, most of Op 7 on a Steinway and the remaining four concertos on a Hammond organ, all three instruments played by the guiding light of this project, the German pianist Ragna Schirmer (b1972).

On the first disc she plays a reconstruction of a richly voiced Walter fortepiano from 1795. How well it integrates with the characterful Handel Festival Orchestra in a recording that captures the bloom of the strings with

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depth and resonance. Schirmer begins with the penultimate of the Op 4 set. Burney, writing in 1785, tells us how Handel ‘played all the solo parts extempore, while the other instruments left him, *ad libitum*’. But I am sure that, had he introduced the same succession of mordents, shakes and turns that Schirmer does, he would not have allowed them to disturb the pulse of the music, nor used *rubato* to the same extent as she does, pulling back and forth sometimes from bar to bar. There is very little of Handel’s treble clef in her extempore repeats. Try the (far from) *Presto* of Op 4 No 5 or the *Andante* finale of No 1 as illustration. Schirmer’s adventurous spirit, however, lets us hear the A major Concerto, HWV296a, as a work for solo fortepiano and Op 4 No 4 with the organ part played (without fussy additions) by three virtuoso woodwinds.

Disc 2 with the ensemble DaCuore and the Steinway finds Schirmer playing in a far more direct manner with a seductive, velvet tone, rhythmically buoyant, and with discreet ornaments kept to a minimum. Her opening (additional) flourish to Op 7 No 1 with a sonorous, pedalled low B flat underlines the change of instrument. It’s as though we’re listening to a 19th-century view of Handel and, indeed, the tastefully romanticised solo arrangement of HWV295 (*The Cuckoo and Nightingale*) which follows might have been arranged by Eugen d’Albert. In Op 7 No 3 she places Minuet B before Minuet A and then repeats the former. Op 7 No 2 features a stylistically and harmonically anachronistic cadenza by Jens Schlichting, preparing us for the three short movements of Guillaume Connesson’s *Concertino pour piano*, written for Schirmer in 2012 using themes from the organ concertos.

On Disc 3 Handel is given the cool jazz treatment. Stefan Malzew’s arrangements feature vibraphone, trumpet, flugelhorn, tenor and soprano sax, trombone and drum-kit with Schirmer on the Hammond though not, thankfully, attempting to be a jazz organist (she plays her part straight from the score and without ornaments). Some movements work better than others: I think the arrangement of Op 4 No 6 rather trivialises and cheapens the music, whereas the Minuet of Op 7 No 5 as a vibe solo is highly effective. The enjoyment of the players is palpable and I have a feeling that Handel might have raised an amused if quizzical eyebrow at their presumption.

Jeremy Nicholas

Madetoja

Symphonies - No 1, Op 29; No 3, Op 55.

Okon Fuoko Suite, Op 58

Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra / John Storgårds

Ondine (F) ODE1211-2 (67' • DDD)



Leevi Madetoja was a hard-working composer-conductor-teacher-critic whose strongest claims to fame are his two operas, *The Ostrobothnians* and *Juba*. His three symphonies are talented, unpretentious examples of the post-Romantic line, lacking a clearly distinctive voice (by contrast with, from this generation, say, Erkki Melartin) yet unfailingly well-crafted and grateful on the ear.

The First Symphony (of 1914–16, making it an exact contemporary of Nielsen’s *Inextinguishable*) was nevertheless recognised by Sibelius, who guided Madetoja on and off from 1908 to 1910, as an auspicious debut. Touches of Sibelian chattering woodwind enliven the otherwise merely well-behaved first movement, and the affinity runs deeper in the other two movements without ever matching the master’s Beethovenian gift for opening up broad vistas from the tiniest of apertures.

A decade further on, the Third Symphony is mainly light and serenade-like in tone (very much so by comparison with the ambitious intervening Second). There is a touch of intriguing bleakness in the *Adagio* second movement but in general the piece feels like a throwback to a more comfortable age – around the 1870 or ’80s, perhaps.

More striking and memorable is the four-movement *Okon Fuoko Suite*, derived from Madetoja’s ballet-pantomime about a Japanese doll-maker driven to suicide by one of his creations. Composed shortly after the Third Symphony, the music is ear-catching in its sonorities and far from obvious in its rhythmic and harmonic language – sufficiently so as to prompt regrets that the hard-pressed composer did not live to realise his plans for a fourth symphony or a Finnish *Parsifal*.

The Helsinki performances are a touch more energetic and colourful than those of their Icelandic rivals on Chandos.

David Fanning

Selected comparison – coupled as above:

Iceland SO, Sakari (8/92R, 1/93R, 2/01)

(CHAN) CHAN6626

Nielsen

Symphonies - No 4, 'Inextinguishable', Op 29;

No 5, Op 50

Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra /

Sakari Oramo

BIS (F) BIS2028 (70' • DDD/DSD)



If that really is restraint I’m hearing inside these performances of Nielsen’s Fourth and Fifth Symphonies from Sakari Oramo and the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, I’m surprisingly unconcerned. Nielsen’s harmonic bump-and-grind remains well served, and Oramo’s pathway through these incendiary works is valiant and thoughtful – even if he point-blank refuses to emerge from the skirmish with a bloodied nose.

Alan Gilbert’s new Nielsen cycle on Dacapo is where to go if you want fresh blood (although someone less generous than myself might say that the blood spilt there is of the choreographed, Sam Peckinpah variety); but, with a profusion of recent and continuing Nielsen cycles and one-off symphony performances (from Gilbert, Jukka-Pekka Saraste, Colin Davis, Gustavo Dudamel et al), who could blame Oramo for wanting to carve out terrain to call his own? Or is that letting him off the interpretative hook?

Only an act of wanton destruction, or basic incompetency, could torpedo the fighting mettle of these symphonies and that spirit shines through Oramo’s more urbane performances unscathed. Compared with Gilbert and the NYPO’s raw-boned gallop through the first movement of the Fifth Symphony, Oramo indulges in moments of Alice-like repose and magic realism as the usually menacing snare drum (played by Daniel Kåse) instead teases like a Harlequin’s carnival. Check out 9’15”, where the snare drum (and tambourine) dances against deadpan repeated string notes – a passage that Oramo projects forwards to anticipate the unhappy humour of Nielsen’s Sixth.

Unlike Bernstein and Schönwandt, where the improvised snare drum cadenza actively aims to disrupt the performance (albeit within accepted boundaries), here the snare drum works with the orchestra, rolling the infernal machine forwards. And the second-movement fugue also works against our expectations. Saraste’s performance is a full-on *dance macabre*; here it diplomatically jangles the nerves.

Timpani tritones rock the beginning of Saraste’s Fourth with harmonic instability, while Oramo sounds entrenched and stately. When subsequently the tritones ‘right’ themselves into perfect intervals, Oramo’s view snaps neatly into place like a Billy Bookcase and it’s difficult not to admire, even if you can’t unconditionally



Hammond Handel: Ragna Schirmer at her organ for Handel's concertos through the prism of instruments from later times

love, music-making of such clear-headed purpose and intelligence. True enough, the timpani duel in the last movement sounds more like a moderately ill-tempered tiff than a full scale assault; but no one could accuse Oramo of inconsistency. **Philip Clark**

Selected comparisons – coupled as above:

New York PO, Bernstein

(5/63^b, 4/70^b, 2/11) (SONY) 88697 68365-2

Danish Nat RSO, Schönwandt (9/00^b) (NAXO) 8 570739

Paganini



'Paganini Fantasy'

Violin Concerto No 1, Op 6^a. Caprices, Op 1 – No 1; No 11; No 24. Cantabile, Op 17^b. Moses-Fantasy^c.

Violin Sonata No 12, Op 3 No 6^c

Nemanja Radulović vn ^bLaure Favre-Kahn pf

^bLes Trilles du Diable; ^cRAI National Symphony Orchestra / Eiji Oue

DG/Discovery F 481 0655 (63' • DDD)



From the very first bar of some discs you know you are in safe hands – artist, orchestra, conductor, sound recording, balance, acoustic – and this is one of them. You just have to sit back and enjoy it. It is not just the attractive programme, with its

welcome admixture of concerto, solos and chamber works, but the exuberant performances, energised, one suspects, by the charismatic young Serbian soloist (the booklet pictures him with black shoulder-length hair in imitation of the famous faked photograph of Paganini).

He presents his credentials with a dazzling account of the Caprice No 5 before Eiji Oue and the RAI players launch into the Op 6 Violin Concerto with all guns blazing. Radulović's commanding technique makes child's play of Paganini's myriad technical challenges, matched by a beguiling tone, expressive vocal phrasing and perfect intonation (few have made the harmonics in the G major section of the finale sing quite as sweetly). He plays his own adaptation of Nathan Milstein's cadenza in the first movement and is not above introducing a few slight textual amendments to the third. Les Trilles du Diable, Radulović's string quintet colleagues, provide no less stylish support in the Cantabile and, joined by pianist Laure Favre-Kahn, in Aleksandar Sedlar's resourceful, utterly convincing arrangement of the *Moses-Fantasy* (for the G string alone). Radulović despatches this with tremendous panache and ends as he began with a solo Caprice, No 24 in A minor, the best-known of the set.

This is an exceptional disc by any standards and hard to better as an introduction to Paganini's genius. In fact, it has everything going for it except the booklet's two pages of quasi-English devoted to the soloist's biography. Apart from being a quite exceptionally boring list of venues, artists and orchestras, it should have been proofread by an editor better acquainted with the language.

Jeremy Nicholas

Pettersson

Symphony No 9

Norrköping Symphony Orchestra / Christian Lindberg

BIS F 7038 (70' • DDD/DSD)



This disc is a revelation. I have long been an admirer of Pettersson's music, particularly the symphonies from the 1960s (Nos 5–8). The climax to this group is the largest of them all, No 9 (1969–70), shortly after the completion of which the composer was hospitalised for nine months with rheumatoid arthritis and kidney disease.

Pettersson's need to communicate had a ferocity unmatched by any composer since Beethoven, often expressed not just in the sustained intensity of his music but also in its use of large, unbroken spans. The Ninth runs, in the composer's own timing, to 65-70 minutes, with Lindberg and his only CD rival (Francis) falling at either end of this range. Lindberg's slightly broader tempi and shaping are spot-on, over 14 minutes faster than Commissiona's highly regarded premiere recording on LP (Philips – nla; not reissued on CD but available on YouTube). This remains a powerful interpretation but at 20 per cent over the maximum timing is arguably a misrepresentation of Pettersson's wishes.

Fine as Francis's version is, it now seems almost a play-through by comparison with Lindberg, lacking the latter's clarity and depth of understanding. Try the dancing episode around six minutes in (closing Lindberg's first track; the start of Francis's third), or the climactic chordal descent at five minutes into track 7 (at around a minute through Francis's tr 12), or the final serene cantilena. Lindberg and the Norrköping players make these come to life in ways that eluded their rival. The disc is full of similar moments and, with BIS's fabulous sound, is not just Lindberg's finest Pettersson recording but one of the finest anyone has committed to disc, to rank alongside Kamu's Sixth (2/77 – nla – which Lindberg's own runs very close, 1/13), Thomas Sanderling's Eighth (CPO, 10/94) and, of course, Dorati's Seventh (Decca, 5/72 – nla). But Lindberg is recording more Pettersson than anyone previously. The Swedish master has found his champion at last. **Guy Rickards**

Comparative version:

DSO Berlin, Francis (9/95) (CPO) CPO999 231-2
(4/07) CPO777 247-2

Pfitzner

'The Romantic Cello Concerto, Vol 4'

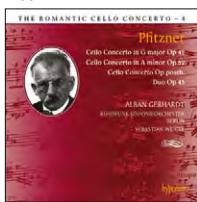
Cello Concertos - Op 42; Op 52; Op posth.
Duo, Op 43^a

Alban Gerhardt vc with ^aGergana Gergova vn

Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra /

Sebastian Weigle

Hyperion (F) CDA67906 (68' • DDD)



Though billed as the fourth volume of Hyperion's 'The Romantic Cello Concerto', most of the music on this disc was written during the 1930s and '40s. Hans Pfitzner, notoriously, was a Nazi-sympathising conservative. But that doesn't

mean he was simply writing 19th-century music in the middle of the 20th century. The earliest and most fascinating composition here, a cello concerto dating from 1889 when he was a 19-year-old student, starts like a pious exercise in Schumann-esque rumination but takes in startling and richly orchestrated outbursts evoking Wagner's Venusberg; a reminder that Pfitzner's finest hours would be in the opera house, with the 'musical legend' *Palestrina* (1912-15), and that he would eventually offer the kind of quirky angles on full-blown Romanticism that were only possible in retrospect.

When he returned to the cello concerto genre in 1935 it was with music of unusual concision, making his typically unsettling mixture of restraint and flamboyance even more effective than usual. The Duo for violin, cello and small orchestra (1937) is also concise but still manages to lapse into the kind of effusive drifting around unmemorable themes that is Pfitzner's Achilles heel. The last concerto, from 1943, has a few similar episodes but is overall more characterful and eventful, its four short movements conveying an uneasy darkness of tone that is understandable, given the year of composition.

The Hyperion team provide a no less characterful recording, close to the music's generally expansive sonorities without obscuring its many distinctive details. Alban Gerhardt is an unfailingly charismatic soloist, finding a sense of purpose where others might lapse into aimlessness, and the orchestral support is first-rate. **Arnold Whittall**

Raff

Symphony No 5, 'Lenore', Op 177.

Abends, Op 163b. Dame Kobold - Overture.

Dornröschen - Prelude. Die Eifersüchtigen - Overture. König Alfred - Overture.

Suisse Romande Orchestra / Neeme Järvi

Chandos (F) CHSA5135 (81' • DDD)



Volume 2 in Neeme Järvi's Raff series for Chandos brings the Fifth (and best-known)

of the prolific Swiss-German composer's 11 symphonies. Finished in 1872, it was a hugely popular concert item in the years prior to the Great War and derives its programme from the poetic ballad 'Lenore', written a century earlier by Gottfried August Bürger (1747-94). It's the finale, entitled 'Reunion in Death', that draws most heavily on the grisly narrative (a soldier returns to his lover after his death

and whisked her off on horseback to the grave that will be their wedding bed) and leaves the listener in no doubt that Raff certainly knew how to handle the orchestra: the apotheosis even brings spooky premonitions of the close of *Also sprach Zarathustra*. Audiences of the period lapped up the third movement's rousing march to war, which starts and finishes in the distance, but by far the most rewarding music is to be found in the thrusting opening *Allegro* – a really fine achievement, this, boasting some genuinely indelible melodies. The slow movement, too, is very touching (gorgeous woodwind-writing towards the close).

Happily, Järvi's performance is an absolutely splendid one – both markedly more propulsive and, to my ears, more excitingly cogent than any other I have encountered, yet with no loss in terms of technical sophistication or affectionate glow. Playing of beguiling sheen also illuminates all five items with which the symphony has been most generously coupled. In addition to three operatic overtures, we are treated to the delectable Prelude from Raff's epic oratorio based on the Grimms' *Dornröschen*, and there's also the pretty 1874 rhapsody *Abends* (a reworking of the fifth movement from the Piano Suite No 6 completed three years previously). Chandos's non-interventionist SACD production (which hails from Geneva's acoustically superb Victoria Hall) wraps you in a warm cocoon of sound. Collectors with a sweet tooth will find this irresistible. **Andrew Achenbach**

Rózsa

'The Film Music of Miklós Rózsa'

Suites from The Thief of Bagdad, Rudyard Kipling's Jungle Book, Sahara (arr Palmer) and Ben-Hur

BBC Philharmonic Orchestra / Rumon Gamba

Chandos (F) CHAN10806 (80' • DDD)



Miklós Rózsa's name is so indelibly linked to historical widescreen epics such as *Ben-Hur* (1959) that it's a pleasure to be reminded of his earlier work, with its links to the Korda family, his fellow Hungarians, and the producers of his earlier work, including *The Thief of Bagdad* (1940) and *Jungle Book* (1942). In these magical pieces set in distant lands that we once called the Orient, Rózsa exhibits a lightness of touch and tuneful simplicity that he never quite managed to recapture in his later work. Far removed from the brazen empirical fanfares

of *Ben-Hur* and ancient Rome, his music for *The Thief of Bagdad* dances along in a kaleidoscopic whirl of instrumental colours, from the winding-up of the Sultan's toys to a jaunty 'Flying Horse Gallop'; then moving on to the seductive 'Silvermaid's Dance'. In *Jungle Book*, the characters and animals, each with their own theme and identification with a particular instrument, spring to life in the manner of *Peter and the Wolf*. A nocturnal jungle scene and a fierce stampede add further contrasts to this appealing work.

The musicologist Christopher Palmer constructed the succinct Suite from the film *Sahara* (1943), a gritty drama of man's heroism in the blazing heat of the North African desert, where the music reflects the inhospitable terrain as well as the welcome sounds of water at an oasis (2'25" into the 'Beginning'). The Suite from *Ben-Hur*, an Academy Award-winner that chalked up a run of 122 weeks on its initial London engagement, includes many of the film's most iconic moments: 'The Rowing of the Galley Slaves', 'Parade of Charioteers' and, of course, that richly endowed Prelude. These performances by the BBC Philharmonic conducted by Rumon Gamba, who have many a cinematic credit to their name, carry the conviction of an original soundtrack recording in state-of-the-art sound. **Adrian Edwards**

Schubert

Symphonies - No 3, D200; No 4, 'Tragic', D417; No 5, D485

Swedish Chamber Orchestra / Thomas Dausgaard
BIS (F) BIS1786 (81' • DDD/DSD)



Images of urbane Schubert disappear at the opening *fortissimo* chord of No 3. Thomas Dausgaard's fairly swift-moving introduction is neither *adagio* nor *maestoso*, yet he creates an air of expectancy for an *Allegro con brio* succinct in string attack, adept in balance, brass ablaze when necessary, the second subject suitably contrasted.

Expect this standard of musicianship in the other movements too. The SACD sound is excellent but timpani are ill-defined and are variably focused in No 4, a murky acoustic also discolouring violins and subduing the mid-range. Yet there is no subduing the force of Dausgaard's interpretation (with augmented strings?), the *Allegro vivace* first movement paced, accented and tensioned to herald a symphony 'the most agitated and dramatic

among his first six' (Michael Griffel), with some respite in an *Andante* whose changing states are less extreme.

Thus far the music never feels hustled – until the first movement of No 5. True, it's *Allegro* in 2/4, but Dausgaard's tempo is too fast for coherent expression. Opaque violins blunt rhythm and pale winds reduce tonal variety. The importance of the horns, notably in the slow movement, is played down, Dausgaard failing to emphasise the shock of their thrusting *f* and *fz* markings at 3'16" and 6'52". Michi Gaigg is throughout meticulous in portraying their value, imparting a character to this symphony that Dausgaard skates over – or seems to in BIS's maddeningly capricious recording, whose vagaries nevertheless don't detract from the stature of Nos 3 and 4. **Nalen Anthoni**

Sym No 3 – selected comparison:

VPO, C Kleiber (11/79^R, 12/85^R) (DG) 449 745-2GOR

Syms Nos 3 & 5 – selected comparison:

Orch of the 18th Century, Brüggen

(7/96^R) (PHIL) 475 7955PB4

Sym No 4 – selected comparison:

Nikolitch (3/10) (PENT) PTC5186 340

No 5 – selected comparison:

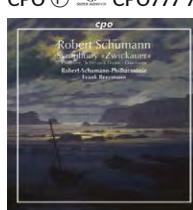
Gaigg (11/12) (DHM) 88697 91138-2

Schumann

Overture, Scherzo and Finale, Op 52. Overtures - Manfred, Op 115; Julius Caesar, Op 128; Hermann und Dorothea, Op 136. Symphony, 'Zwickau'

Robert-Schumann-Philharmonie / Frank Beermann

CPO (F) CPO777 719-2 (66' • DDD/DSD)



Frank Beermann and his Chemnitz-based Robert-Schumann-Philharmonie have

already given us their namesake's symphonies in lithe and sweet-centred readings (12/10), and the *concertante* violin works with Ulf Wallin (BIS, 2/12). Perhaps the various works for piano and cello with orchestra (and even the wonderful four-horn *Konzertstück*) are to follow; meanwhile here is a selection of the overtures and the early symphonic exercise that has come to bear the name of the home of its premiere, along with the poor relation among the works of the 'symphonic year' of 1841, the *Overture, Scherzo and Finale* – a far more enticing work than its somewhat prosaic title suggests.

The best-known number from the incidental music for a Leipzig performance of Byron's archetypally Romantic *Manfred* is its Overture, a work of darkly Beethovenian character and motivic

IN THE STUDIO

An inside view of who's before the mics and what they're recording

• Shostakovich from Donohoe

British pianist **Peter Donohoe** has recorded Dmitry Shostakovich's exploration of the 24 major and minor keys, his testing Preludes and Fugues, Op 87. The disc will be released later this year by Somm.

• Finnissy for violin and piano

Divine Art's contemporary music arm Métier will issue a recording of the works for violin and piano by **Michael Finnissy** in the autumn, following sessions featuring violinist Darragh Morgan and pianist Mary Dullea. Ian Pace's recording of Finnissy's *The History of Photography in Sound* for Métier was awarded a Critic's Choice in Gramophone's January issue.



• Another Seattle Ring

In August, Avie will issue an audio recording of the *Ring* cycle that took place in Seattle in 2013. Seattle Opera's Wagnerian credentials were secured in 1975 when it became the first US company since the Met to stage a full *Ring*. The 2013 cycle, recorded live at the Marion Oliver McCaw Hall, was conducted by **Asher Fisch** (pictured) and counted among its cast Stuart Skelton and Alwyn Mellor.

• Butt alone for Bach

Conductor of this issue's Recording of the Month, **John Butt**, has traded his Dunedin Consort podium position for the 10 fingers of his own hands on his latest recording for Linn Records: Bach's 48 Preludes and Fugues. Linn will release Butt's traversal of *The Well-Tempered Clavier* in October.

• Keiser Passion from Vox Luminis

Gramophone Award-winners Vox Luminis have joined ensemble Les Muffatti to record Reinhard Keiser's *Brockes-Passion* setting for Ramée, which will release the disc shortly. Watch out for a review in these pages.

strength. Here also are the freestanding overtures *Julius Caesar* and *Hermann und Dorothea*: the one bearing some of the ceremonial mien of early Wagner, the other drenched (rather tweely to modern ears) in the Marseillaise, as befits its story (by Goethe) of a pair of lovers caught up in events following the French Revolution. The *Zwickau* Symphony is a slightly sprawling two-movement torso that again betrays traces of Schumann's in-depth study of Beethoven.

Rob Cowan described Beermann's symphony performances as representing a 'variation on the Schumann-lite option that has proved so popular in recent years', although to judge from a picture on the orchestra's website, it's not a noticeably smaller band than used to be more regularly heard in this music. They play admirably enough and those curious will find this single-disc collection handy. Hardcore Schumannistas may prefer (or will more likely already own) the three discs by Thomas Dausgaard and the Swedish Chamber Orchestra on which all these works also appear: true chamber-scale performances cooled by a dash of Scandinavian springwater, offering in nearly every case tempi that are a little swifter, ensemble that is a touch tighter and characterisations that are palpably more acute. **David Threasher**

Selected comparisons:

Swedish CO, Dausgaard (5/07, 5/08, 1/09)
(BIS) BIS-SACD1519, 1569, 1619 (oas)



Schumann

'The Symphonies'
Symphonies - No 1, 'Spring', Op 38; No 2, Op 61;
No 3, 'Rhenish', Op 97; No 4, Op 120

**Chamber Orchestra of Europe /
Yannick Nézet-Séguin**

DG (M) ② 479 2437GH2 (124' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Cité de la Musique, Paris,
November 2012



Yannick Nézet-Séguin here offers true 'Schumann-lite' in performances that pay close attention to detail but don't stint on personality. What we are given are 'The Symphonies', as emblazoned on the booklet cover, largely as they have come to be best known: that is to say, with the revised (1851) version of No 4 rather than the leaner original (1841) as preferred by Brahms, even if Clara Schumann demurred.

These are live performances (applause is excised) but only the most pedantic of

headphones-listeners will spot one or two moments of string insecurity *in extremis*. Nézet-Séguin is but one of the new generation of conductors who have demonstrated their love and understanding of Schumann's music in readings that offer ample quantities of intellect and intuitiveness – head and heart. Dausgaard, of course, is another; mention might also be made of Daniel Harding, whose Second at last year's Proms with the Mahler CO really did reveal the thoroughbred that was in danger of being obscured by the old warhorse; and Robin Ticciati, whose exploration of these works with the Scottish CO, we believe, will be revealed to the record-buying public later this year.

Nézet-Séguin's comments in the booklet demonstrate that he has paid close attention to perceived problems of balance in Schumann's symphonies. He accordingly adopts a string body numbering 9-9-6-5-4, which he says enables, for one thing, a balance of lightness and *agitato* in those many passages of string *tremolo*, as well as facilitating swifter speeds. And it's true: he seems to find the *tempo giusto* in virtually every case, even allowing himself an unscheduled *accelerando* at the end of the Second's first movement. Slow movements provide repose without cloying, while *scherzos* and finales are irresistibly light-footed. Potential pitfalls are seemingly effortlessly skirted around: the obsessive rhythms of the Second, say, or the winding slower sections of the Fourth, which in the wrong hands can sometimes seem aimless.

Nézet-Séguin's response to Schumann's sound strategies are most revealing in the *Rhenish*. Giulini, his teacher, averred that the inner-string repeated quavers at the outset should sound like the splash of a paddleboat on the river. And here they do just that, compared with Dausgaard's more driven performance, where they bring more to mind the blades of a helicopter. Nor does the so-called Cologne Cathedral movement want for majesty from these slimmed-down forces: the first appearance in the work of the three trombones, it also introduces as a new sonority (from about 0'45") sustained strings with first violins in high octaves. Played largely *senza vibrato*, these could sound bleached but instead ratchet up the sun-drenched intensity of the movement, not least when it slips into 3/2 at around 1'55" and introduces the theme in diminution as a seven-note inner-string figure, here played *molto marcato* for maximum contrast, helping to build to a well-achieved catharsis before the finale ties up all the symphony's contrapuntal loose ends.

Good, too, to hear repeats observed – especially in the Fourth's finale, where it can still take one by surprise. Schumann-lite this may be; but it now becomes a heavyweight contender in a far from uncrowded corner of the market.

David Threasher

Tüür

Piano Concerto^a. Symphony No 7, 'Pietas'^b

^aLaura Mikkola pf^bNDR Choir; Frankfurt Radio
Symphony Orchestra / Paavo Järvi

ECM New Series (F) 481 0675 (62' • DDD)



Of all symphonists active in this century, few have impressed me as strongly as the Estonian Erkki-Sven Tüür. I say that without having yet encountered his Fifth, Sixth and Eighth Symphonies. But No 7 (2009) certainly lives up to the standards of No 4 (with its *concertante* percussion part for Evelyn Glennie) and makes me eager to catch up with the rest.

This is another granite-hewn score, which seizes you by the magnificence of its sound-masses, then holds you by the logic of their mutations. At the very beginning I thought I had somehow strayed into Per Nørgård's Sixth Symphony, whose magical, multi-layered, silvery descents it echoes. But the comparison with the Dane is a compliment to the music's capacity to inspire awe and to retain control over an unfolding argument.

There is a catch, however. Tüür dedicates the work to the Dalai Lama and includes choral declamations of aphorisms from the young Buddha, Gandhi, Jimi Hendrix, St Augustine, Mother Teresa and Deepak Chopra. It's hard to see anyone dissenting from the sentiments of the words themselves. But I have to wonder what the work gains from having such soundbite spirituality so blatantly spelt out (in English but in such a way that barely a word is audible). Furthermore, entitling the work *Pietas* ('Piety') itself offers a hostage to fortune, since what was an unquestioned virtue to the likes of Virgil and Cicero has acquired negative connotations in the domain of aesthetic values (as in 'pious hopes'). Yet what an extraordinary feat of musical imagination is the work's 20-minute concluding movement.

Few composers are able to sign themselves in with a single note. But Tüür manages it with the opening of his Piano Concerto (2008), a low C rung out by the piano, coloured by metallophones and prolonged by low strings and brass. To



Unique combinations: David Palmquist, Egils Sefers, Niels Anders Vedsten Larsen and the Sinfonietta Riga take on virtuoso 'multiple' wind concertos

invoke the overtone series straight afterwards may seem like a rather obvious ploy; but it justifies itself in retrospect, thanks to the sheer harmonic and textural resourcefulness that follows. The three movements run continuously. You might not actually spot the divisions, except that the second movement is where the piano-writing suddenly, and rather grandly, evokes Messiaen, and that the third begins with a kind of free-jazz accompanied cadenza. The latter, I have to say, sticks out like the proverbial sore thumb. Otherwise the combination of logic and boldness is engrossing from first to last. **David Fanning**

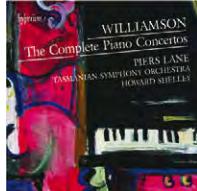
Williamson

Four Piano Concertos. Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra^a. Sinfonia concertante^b

Piers Lane pf **Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra / Howard Shelley** ^apf with ^bYoram Levy, ^bMark Bain,

^bMartin Phillipson tpts

Hyperion M ② CDA68011/12 (117' • DDD)



Once riding on a wave of popularity, Malcolm Williamson (1931–2003, Australian born but resident in London for the major part

of his life) has slipped from view. So Hyperion's two-CD set of the complete piano concertos comes as a useful reminder of a brilliantly lightweight talent, but also of limitations. Carolyn Philpott's necessarily detailed notes (with assistance from Howard Shelley and Simon Campion) tell us that Williamson was at one time the most commissioned composer in Britain; his music, by his own admission, 'fundamentally tonal, above all lyrical and reflecting the brashness of the cities rather than the bush or deserts of Australia'.

Yet while buoyed up by such enthusiasm, I feel that the piano concertos, while interesting at one level, are a let-down at another. True, the First Concerto's mournful opening before a burst into hyperactive chatter makes an attractive start, its second subject as accessible as you could wish. Even here, though, a touch of modernity for the masses hovers over its volatility: effective, but rejoicing in detachment rather than more personal virtues. In the 1971 Concerto for two pianos and strings, where Piers Lane is joined by Howard Shelley, everything is whipped up into an outwardly exhilarating but impersonal blend. The ghosts of Ravel, Prokofiev and Shostakovich hover close to the surface; and even in the *Sinfonia*

concertante, a combination of piano, three trumpets and string orchestra, there is only a minimal advance in the idiom.

What is memorable is Lane's playing. Whether dazzling or reflective, he shows a total empathy for Williamson. He is superbly partnered by Shelley and the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra. Sound and balance are outstanding, and Hyperion's presentation is both lavish and informative. **Bryce Morrison**

'Concertante'

'Virtuosic Wind Concertos'

Belloli Concerto for Clarinet, Horn and

Orchestra^a **Danzi** Concerto for Clarinet, Bassoon

and Orchestra, Op 47^b **Jadin** Symphonie

concertante for Clarinet, Horn, Bassoon and

Orchestra^c **Lachner** Concertino for Horn,

Bassoon and Orchestra, Op 43^d

^a**Egils Sefers** cl ^{bcd}**Niels Anders Vedsten Larsen** bn

^{bcd}**David Palmquist** hn

Sinfonietta Riga / Claus Efland

Challenge Classics F CC72621 (69' • DDD)



The subtitle of this enterprising release by rights should be 'Virtuoso Wind

hyperion NEW RELEASES

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL *The Eight Great Suites*

Danny Driver's recordings of CPE Bach's keyboard works have been much admired: praised by critics as deeply stylish and revelatory accounts of eighteenth-century works on a modern piano, with Driver's impeccable pianism constantly present. Now he turns to Handel's 'Eight Great Suites', largely written when the composer was resident in Cannons, near London.

DANNY DRIVER piano

ILDEBRANDO PIZZETTI MARIO CASTELNUOVO-TEDESCO *Violin Sonatas*

Hagai Shaham and Arnon Erez continue their exploration of the early twentieth-century violin repertoire, turning this time to Italy. These musicians are noted for their full-blooded performances: here they revel exuberantly in the music's operatic passion.

HAGAI SHAHAM violin
ARNON EREZ piano

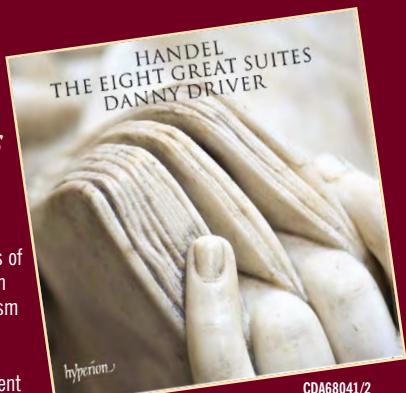
helios ANTON BRUCKNER *Symphony No 3*

'Vänskä conducts Bruckner with power and understanding and draws rich and finely nuanced playing' (*Gramophone*)
BBC SCOTTISH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
OSMO VÄNSKÄ conductor

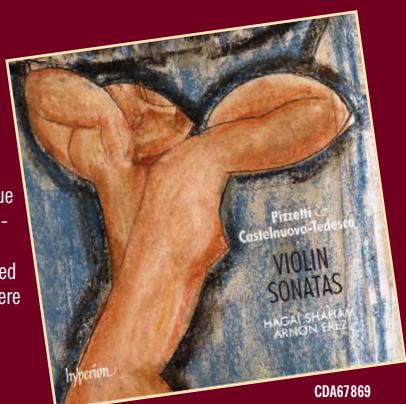
helios MAURICE DURUFLÉ *The Complete Organ Music*

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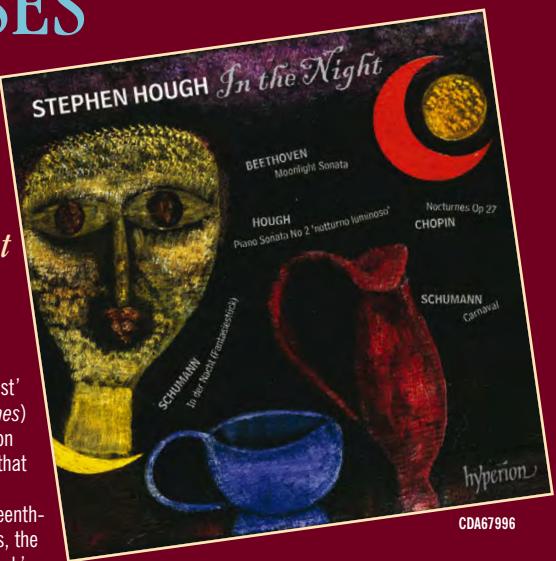


CDA67869

STEPHEN HOUGH *In the Night*

This latest recital album by 'the thinking person's virtuoso: an extraordinary pianist' (*The New York Times*) takes the listener on a journey through that most intense and absorbing of nineteenth-century obsessions, the night. Stephen Hough's thoughtful programming creates a new aural sphere for some of the most celebrated piano works in the repertoire.

STEPHEN HOUGH piano

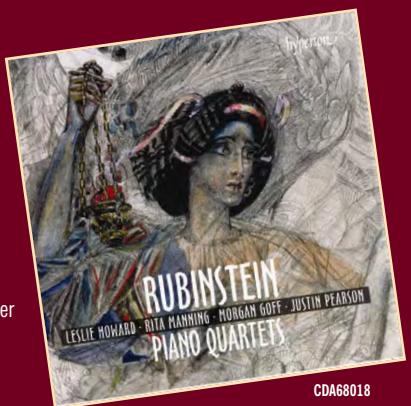


CDA67996

ANTON RUBINSTEIN *Piano Quartets*

Pianist Leslie Howard is acclaimed as 'a virtuoso in the true Romantic style with its emphasis on musicality as much as bravura' (*The Guardian*). He is joined here by three of his frequent string collaborators for two forgotten masterpieces of the Russian nineteenth-century chamber music tradition by renowned pianist-composer Anton Rubinstein.

LESLIE HOWARD piano
RITA MANNING violin
MORGAN GOFF viola
JUSTIN PEARSON cello

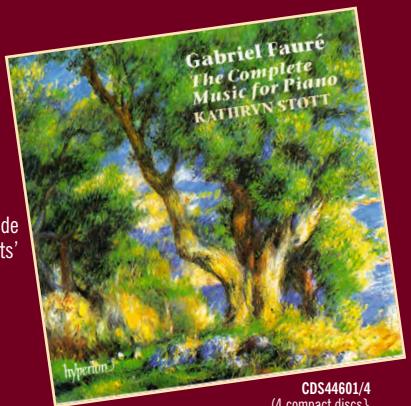


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Double Concertos', since three of the four works here feature either unusual or quite possibly unique combinations from the pool of clarinet, bassoon and horn, which are combined in the concluding *Symphonie concertante* by Louis Emmanuel Jadin (1768–1853). The soloists here are all members of the Danish wind quintet Carion and their knowledge of each other as players shines through in these beautifully prepared and balanced performances.

Agostino Belloli (1778–1837), the most celebrated of a horn-playing family and an exact contemporary of Hummel, is all but forgotten these days but his Concerto for clarinet and horn shows him to have been a most capable, if a touch lightweight composer. Not unlike Danzi (the only one of these composers to be still widely played) and Ignaz Lachner (1807–95; his brother Franz is the well-known member of that family), perhaps, whose four-movement concertinos are deftly written, expressive but with no pretence to profundity. Jadin, by contrast, seems on the evidence of his two-part *Symphonie concertante* (there is a central *Adagio* but its 76 seconds are really a slow up-beat to the finale) a composer of potentially greater range.

After this delightful Classical-period programme, perhaps this same team will do something similar with more modern repertoire (with a chance to feature the excluded flautist and oboist from the Carion Wind Quintet and others): Strauss's *Duett-Concertino* is an obvious contender; likewise Hindemith's brace from 1949 (the concertos for woodwinds and harp, and for trumpet and bassoon); and then what about McCabe's for oboe and clarinet? There is scope for these fine players to enrich the catalogue further. Recommended for the unadventurous, who will find much to enjoy here. **Guy Rickards**

'Declamatory Counterpoint'

Beethoven String Quartet No 13, Op 130 – Cavatina^a **Eliasson** *In medias* **Hamel** *Ulisono*^a **Mozart** String Quartet No 19, 'Dissonance', K465 – 1st mov't^a **Pärt** *Orient and Occident*^a **Schwarz-Schilling** Symphony for Strings **Symphonia Momentum / Christoph Schlüren** Aldi Là (F) ARCD004 (79' • DDD)

^aRecorded live



Easy to respect but not so easy to hear, the newly formed chamber orchestra Symphonia

Momentum shows its commitment to little-known repertoire by filling its first disc with challenging music of obvious personal significance for director Christoph Schlüren. But much of it may seem obscure (even resistible) to the rest of us. The rediscovery of Reinhold Schwarz-Schilling (1904–85) definitely benefits from this recording of the Symphony for Strings – but mainly to send listeners hunting for the 1932 String Quartet in F minor from which it's transcribed. The piece doesn't always make the most of its deeply felt thematic material – imagine a depressive Hindemith – and has extreme registers that a string quartet might accomplish with less audible strain than the 20-piece orchestra. Also, the string orchestra medium imposes a uniformity of sound that takes away from the light-and-shade potential that is sorely needed in such wintry, closely argued music.

Much of the rest of the disc feels like bits of this and that to illustrate a cross section of what the orchestra is up to. On the new-music front, Peter Michael Hamel is represented by *Ulisono*, written for the group with the sort of musical non sequiturs one associates with Schnittke, though not with his sense of expressive imperative. Anders Eliasson's *In medias* is described in the booklet as one of the more 'densely wrought' 20th-century works for unaccompanied violin but, perhaps owing to the understanding of Rebekka Harmann's performance, it doesn't require anything close to the microscopic listening of Schwarz-Schilling.

More-travelled repertoire includes Mozart and Beethoven string quartet transcriptions – fine for an occasional hearing – plus Arvo Pärt's *Orient and Occident*, which has special meaning to a group that draws its membership from some 13 countries. But what ever happened to programming pieces not for their extramusical significance but because they illuminate each other?

David Patrick Stearns

'Il diario di Chiara'

'Music from La Pietà in Venice in the 18th century' **Bernasconi** Sinfonia in D **Latilla** Sinfonia in G **Martinelli** Viola d'amore Concerto, 'Per la S^a Chiara'. Violin Concerto, 'dedicato al S^a Chiara' **Perotti** Grave in G minor **Porpora** Sinfonia a tre in G **Porta** Sinfonia in D **Vivaldi** Violin Concerto, 'Per la S^a Chiara', RV372. Sinfonia, 'Il coro delle Muse', RV149 **Europa Galante / Fabio Biondi** vn **Glossa** (F) GCD923401 (73' • DDD)

Include bonus DVD: 'Il diario di Chiara', a film by Lucrezia Le Moli and Fabio Biondi (32' • NTSC • 16:9 • 0 • S)



Music from the Pietà, and less than a quarter of it by Vivaldi? That's right. Vivaldi is only the most famous of the seven composers brought together here, all of whom were connected in some way with the Ospedale della Pietà, the Venetian foundling hospital whose all-female orchestra was so widely renowned. All but Porta were active there in the decades after Vivaldi's death in 1741, and at least four of them – Porpora, Bernasconi, Martinelli and Latilla (in that order) – were, like Vivaldi, employed as teachers.

A more personal focus is opened up, however, by the music's links to one of the most talented of the Pietà's young violinists, a woman born in 1718 and known, since Ospedale inmates were allocated Christian names only, as Chiara, Chiarella or Chiara del Violin. Reckoned by one observer to be among the finest violinists in Europe, she must indeed have had a formidable technique, to judge from the concertos inscribed to her by Vivaldi and Martinelli. The Martinelli pieces recorded here, as well as the little slow movement by Perotti, come from her Diario, a personal manuscript book of working repertoire and written-out cadenzas. She lived on at the Pietà as a player and teacher until 1791, by which time music had changed quite a bit, but the stylistic evolutions of just the middle part of the century are evident when you compare Vivaldi's edgy Baroque torrents with the more complacent pre-Classical certainties of Martinelli and, especially, Latilla.

Not that Fabio Biondi and Europa Galante treat any of this music as if it were anything less than burstingly vital. Vigorous bowing, an aggressive, sometimes almost *pesante* sound, seething vibrato in the solo lines and boldly gestural *rubato* mean that things are never allowed to flag. If anything it is all rather full-on; there are surely places where more sweetness is required.

Also included is a half-hour film which attempts further insight into Chiara's world by means of imagined memoirs read by an actress cut together with atypically tough-looking shots of Venice and (not strictly necessary) glimpses of Europa Galante in rehearsal.

Lindsay Kemp

Mozart's Requiem

Conductor John Butt tells *David Vickers* about undoing old habits for a fresh new approach

Few places in London are more suited to a discussion about 18th-century choral music than the Foundling Museum.

Handel gave charity performances of *Messiah* at the Foundling Hospital, so it is the perfect venue to meet the polymathic performer-scholar John Butt, whose newest venture with Dunedin Consort applies his inquisitive scholarship and imaginative musicianship to another monumental cornerstone of the choral repertoire: early performances of Mozart's *Requiem*. Decades ago, musicologists demystified the work's enigmatic commission by the eccentric Count von Walsegg in memory of his late wife, and studies of the two key manuscript sources have revealed how much music Mozart sketched before his untimely death, and to what extent the rest of the work was completed by others. His widow's first choice for the job was Haydn's distant cousin Joseph Eybler, who filled out the string parts up to 'Confutatis'; but on being appointed elsewhere he relinquished the daunting task to Franz Xaver Süssmayr.

The completed *Requiem* was first performed at Jahn's Hall in Vienna on January 2, 1793, in a concert organised for the benefit of Constanze and her children by Baron Gottfried van Swieten and the Gesellschaft der Associerten Cavaliere – a music society that Mozart had directed in his own arrangements of Handel's works. Butt uses information about Mozart's Handelian projects to reconstruct the likely scale and constitution of the orchestra and choir. True to Dunedin Consort's ethos, this means that the

'The orchestration lays out the background wash before the artist can paint the picture' – John Butt

soloists are also members of the choir. The impetus for Butt's recording was David Black's new edition of the score, which restores the work to its likely content before alterations and errors crept into the first printed edition (Breitkopf & Härtel: 1800). We both eagerly consult our copies of Black's full score, pointing out passages that reveal which parts are authentic Mozart and how much Süssmayr added. All posthumous additions are marked in brackets, and this prompts stimulating discussion in praise of Süssmayr's filling out of the orchestral accompaniments to Mozart's own voice parts, *basso continuo* lines and occasional fragments of parts for the strings, woodwind



Reformer John Butt: he's never one to follow the crowd – with spectacular results

and brass. Butt mentions that Mozart's *Requiem aeternam* theme bears an uncanny resemblance to Handel's anthem *The ways of Zion do mourn*, written for the funeral of Queen Caroline (1737), and I suggest that another connection between the two works is Handel's final chords and Mozart's cadence at the end of the 'Kyrie', both of which lack the minor third but instead lay open a bare fifth. 'Absolutely!' says Butt. 'That bare fifth at the end of the "Kyrie" is a really thrilling sonority! Also, that doleful chorale-style theme for *Requiem aeternam* crops up later in the work, for example in Süssmayr's bassoon part in "Lacrimosa", and again in the *Agnus Dei* bass parts.'

Looking closely at 'Tuba mirum,' Butt enthuses, 'We can see here that Mozart had already written out the whole of the tenor trombone obbligato during the bass solo, all of the voice parts throughout the movement, the orchestral bass-line, and also little orchestral lead-ins in the string parts between the singers' phrases. Quite a lot of little details essential to the piece in its final form were actually written or sketched by Mozart. But when the tenor soloist comes in, Süssmayr had to add the string parts – but he already had Mozart's *basso continuo* line underneath, so it was just a question of realising how Mozart would have composed string parts over that kind of bass-line, and then building it from the ground up. It reminds us that so much of



The historical view

Franz Xaver Süssmayr
Letter to Breitkopf & Härtel, Feb 8, 1800

'During Mozart's lifetime I often sang and played through with him the movements that were already composed, and he talked to me frequently about the detailed working out of this composition, and explained the ways and the means of his instrumentation.'

Christoph Wolff
In 'Mozart Studies', ed C Eisen (1991), page 81

'[Süssmayr] was forced to compose [...] a score on the basis of sketchy [...] musical information [...] more or less mechanically and routinely, rarely imaginatively, manufactured a product that exhibits Mozartian vocabulary without the proper language.'

David Black
*From the preface to his edition of Mozart's *Requiem* (Edition Peters, 2013)*

'Whatever the shortcomings of Süssmayr's completion [of Mozart's *Requiem*], it is the only document that may transmit otherwise lost directions or written material from Mozart.'

Mozart's compositional process was grounded in contrapuntal training constructed solidly on figured bass.' When I observe that the opening of 'Tuba mirum' should be eloquent rather than blustery, Butt heartily agrees: 'The timing of this music is more important than merely its volume. Natural trombones have such a lovely sound. And the nuances of each of the four solo voices take us away from the trumpet-laden fire and brimstone of "Dies irae" and combine in an operatic-style ensemble: the tenor part could easily be something for Ferrando [*Così fan tutte*] which moves from an impassioned declamatory opening phrase ["Mors stupebit et natura"] into a sweeter more seductive melodic line ["Liber scriptus proferetur"], and then we go back to severity with the alto, whereas the soprano is vulnerable – so there are four different characters, really. It's also the only part of the score that has no thematic reference at its end to its beginning, but is entirely through-composed. We worked on different ways of string bowing, tailoring each kind of bow stroke to the contrasting passages. So often the bass-line is the crucial element, so we worked on getting the upper strings to respond to it as the leader; I also encourage the singers to perform off the bass. The singers shouldn't be listening predominantly to the upper instruments, but primarily to the orchestral bass because that's what every other part of the music relates to.'

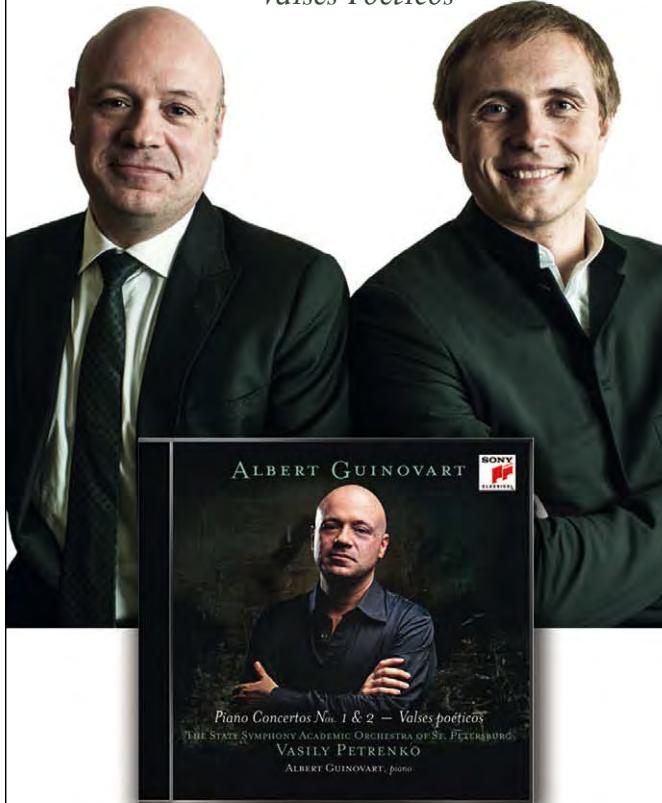
Butt points to several movements that got him thinking about articulation and transitions appropriate for illustrating the text's meaning. 'For the dotted rhythms in "Rex tremenda" the trick is for the vigour to be produced by articulation rather than merely by volume. If you slam it out all the time you don't get any sense of direction, and the hint of a French overture has to have a certain kind of dignity and elegance to it. I wanted it to be resonant rather than deafening, and it also means that when the choir sings "Salve me, fons pietatis" it's a natural extension of the musical mood that already exists. Another good example of this is where choirs usually let rip in the fugue "Quam olim Abrahae". Although I certainly want the music to be impactful, my intention is to get the string parts right, and then drop the choral fugue into that texture, rather than simply letting the choir go hell for leather, which then forces the orchestra to match it. So it's a case of thinking about the music's construction the other way around, so that the orchestration lays out the background wash before the artist can paint the picture. Using the same singers across the break between soloists and choir is crucial because you can hear the continuity; when the consoling solo voices describe the souls of the faithful being brought into a holy light, it naturally leads into the fugue reminding us that this is fulfilling God's promise to Abraham. The sections feel better connected, and it becomes clearer that it's the conclusion to a sentence rather than an unrelated new paragraph.'

Butt surprises me when he reveals that his favourite part of the score is 'Recordare': 'It's the only full-form *ritornello* movement in the piece, and I just love how Mozart uses the mechanics of the violins and violas to build up rising sequences of pitch. It's a wonderfully rich late-18th-century reworking of an old Baroque Vivaldian-style practice, but I've always wondered if Bruckner used this section as a model for this kind of beautiful sonority. With the increase of alternative versions in recent years, it's become too easy to overlook the importance of the reception and influence of Süssmayr's version of the piece, regardless of its occasional deficiencies and faults. Verdi and Fauré also took a lot of things out of Süssmayr's completion. We want to reconsider the form in which "Mozart's" Requiem became such an iconic work.'

► To read Gramophone's review of Dunedin Consort's recording turn to page 28

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Chamber



Guy Rickards reviews a second recording of Jón Leifs's quartets: 'The players treat the sometimes awkward-sounding idiom as if it were the most natural style on the planet' ► REVIEW ON PAGE 48



Duncan Druce on discovering the string quartets of János Végh: 'Végh goes beyond inventiveness and expertise to create structures with emotional power' ► REVIEW ON PAGE 51

JS Bach

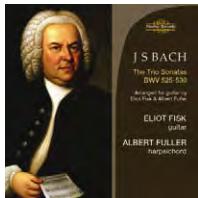
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Six Trio Sonatas, BWV525-530 (arr Fisk & Fuller)

Eliot Fisk gtr Albert Fuller hpd

Nimbus Ⓜ NI2583 (76' • DDD)

Recorded 1998. From MusicMasters 67182-2



Some of the contrasts in character between the many movements of these six sonatas that are so easily achieved on the organ can easily be lost when they are separated from that instrument. Their perfection, both as music and as the study aids for Bach's son that they were, requires complete equality in balance between the two manuals and pedals. The matching of plucked instruments in guitar and harpsichord may allow for this but it's still not totally evenly balanced or together, so it's hard to engage with these pieces without a reinforced bass-line to represent the organ pedal part. In these arrangements by Eliot Fisk and Albert Fuller there is not as much attention paid to the left hand of the harpsichord as there was in Julian Bream's effective lute arrangements. This isn't necessarily a bad thing – it just transports the listener very far away from what is really the true identity of these pieces and in the same way loses the masterful sense of total self-containment that these pieces have.

It's fortunate, then, that the trio sonatas happen to work so well for guitar – Fisk plays with enormous warmth and commitment in this reissue of his 1998 recording. His profound insight into the counterpoint brings out the beauty of the melodies and their inner dialogue with great ease in a way that has a disarming ability to sound so beautiful on the guitar.

Caroline Gill

Brahms

Clarinet Quintet, Op 115^a

String Quartet No 2, Op 51 No 2

^aMichael Collins cl Brodsky Quartet

Chandos Ⓜ CHAN10817 (76' • DDD)



Few composers were more fiercely self-critical than Brahms. His habit of destroying works he viewed as unworthy remained with him all his life, and this is partly explained by his sense of past achievement, most notably in the string quartet form. Yet he produced many chamber music masterpieces. As one writer put it, 'where sheer beauty is evoked, it is as a consolation; nostalgia and melancholy often seem to underlie the most rhythmically assertive ideas'. Such ambiguity is at the heart of both the A minor String Quartet and the Clarinet Quintet. On the other hand, most notably in the Quartet's second-movement *Andante moderato*, there is contrast rather than integration, with outer sections that serenely resolve all that has gone flanking central vigour.

The change from Op 51 to Op 115 is not surprising, marked by a greater feeling of all things autumnal and ending in a transcendental calm. Here and throughout, Michael Collins's awareness of his role as *primus inter pares* rather than *prima donna* is one of the special joys of this outstanding disc. Both he and the Brodskys erase all possible strenuousness and opacity (always dangers in such richly contrapuntal writing) with supreme clarity, vigour and refinement. Finely recorded, this is outstanding even by Collins and the Brodskys's standards. Bryce Morrison

Dvořák · Smetana · Suk

Dvořák Piano Trio No 2, Op 26 B56

Smetana Piano Trio, Op 15 Suk Piano Trio, Op 2

Feininger Trio

AVI-Music Ⓜ AVI8553293 (76' • DDD)



Did you know that Josef Suk composed a habanera? Well, neither did I and, in all

probability, neither did he. And yet that's exactly what the second movement of his appealing C minor Op 2 Trio sounds like, a gently swaying chamber morsel that wouldn't be out of place in the cafés of Seville. The rest of the work more approximates the world of Suk's future son-in-law Dvořák and, most especially, his feted predecessor Smetana, the Trio's finale sounding, at least initially, very much like the *scherzo* of Smetana's great G minor. You can easily facilitate a comparison by switching from track 6 to track 9 on the present CD. Interesting too that the excellent Feininger Trio's pianist, Adrian Oetiker, studied with that superb Liszt player Lazar Berman, because Liszt's influence on Smetana is at its most obvious in the Trio's impassioned first movement, which is where Oetiker excels. I doubt that Smetana ever composed a more seductive melody than the one that takes over soon after the *Presto* finale begins and the interpretation captured here has an appealingly meditative feel about it.

In fact all three performances on this well-engineered CD are profoundly musical, the Trio's two string players both members of the Berlin Philharmonic and therefore used to achieving a warm tonal blend. Nice too that the programme's centrepiece is one of Dvořák's less well-known trios, an effusively lyrical piece, composed in the year that also saw the completion of both Dvořák's Piano Concerto and Smetana's First Quartet, and graced with a *Largo* second movement that achieves its affectingly poetic atmosphere through the simplest means. The most obvious CD comparisons in all three works (though not on the same disc) are by the man to whose memory the present collection is dedicated, the violinist Josef Suk, his trio being among the finest in the second half of the 20th century. But even in spite of Suk's gorgeous tone, the Feingers easily hold their own; and, as the programme itself is sensibly planned as well as beautifully played, I am happy to award it a keen recommendation.

Rob Cowan

Fauré · Shostakovich

'Earth and Sky'

Fauré Piano Trio, Op 120

Shostakovich Piano Trio No 2, Op 67

Neave Piano Trio

Neave Trio (F) 640236 950122 (45' • DDD)



It's a brave move by the Neave Trio to couple two of the most searing trios in the repertoire. Searing for different reasons: Fauré wrote his a year before his death, while Shostakovich's Second dates from the Second World War and was dedicated to the memory of Ivan Sollertinsky. The trios may have a shared intensity but there the similarities end. And that is one of the issues here: both pieces are approached with a puppyish enthusiasm where broad brush-strokes count for more than finesse.

Take the slow movement of Fauré's Trio. It needs an absolutely steady tread but the Neave can't resist little speedings-up, little elongations. Clearly they're struck by the touching quality of this music; but its potency comes from a certain restraint. In the last movement their pianist doesn't match the fingery liveness of Eric Le Sage. And as a whole they lack the tautness of expression of the most compelling readings – not just the recent Alpha one but also those from the Capuçons and the Florestan. The very close recording doesn't help, catching intakes of breath and page-turns. And the disc comes without notes, referring you simply to their website.

No matter how often you hear it, the opening of the Shostakovich is surely one of the most extraordinary passages in the trio repertoire. But the Neave's string players can't compete with the duetting of Bell/Isserlis, Kremer/Maisky or of course Oistrakh in any of his various performances. In the second movement their pianist has due heft but as an ensemble they lack the precision of Bell et al and the fire of Kremer and colleagues. And the Wanderer (though I'm not that keen on their recording quality) catch the despair of the slow movement to overwhelming effect. **Harriet Smith**

Fauré – selected comparisons:

Florestan Trio (3/00) (HYPE) CDA67114

R & G Capuçon, Angelich (12/11) (VIRG) 070875-2

Le Sage et al (3/14) (ALPH) ALPHA603

Shostakovich – selected comparisons:

Bell, Isserlis, Mustonen (9/97) (DECC) 478 2100DX3

Kremer, Maisky, Argerich

(10/99) (DG) 459 326-2GH or 477 8847GB6

Trio Wanderer (10/05) (HARM) HMG50 1825

Oistrakh, Knushevitsky, Oborin (DORE) DHR7714

Hindemith

'Complete Viola Works, Vol 2 -

Sonatas for Viola & Piano and Solo Viola'

Solo Viola Sonatas – Op 11 No 5; Op 25 No 1;

Op 31 No 4; 1937. Viola Sonatas^a – Op 11 No 4;

Op 25 No 4; 1939

Tabea Zimmermann va ^aThomas Hoppe pf

Myrios (M) ② MYRO11 (117' • DDD/DSD)



Most viola players separate Hindemith's sonatas with piano on disc from the unaccompanied works. Even Kim Kashkashian, whose ECM twofer contained all seven, segregated the accompanied works on disc 2. Tabea Zimmermann plays them in chronological-numerical sequence, with pairs of solo sonatas divided by Op 25 No 4 with piano (1923; which closes disc 1), the whole framed by the most immediately appealing of them all, the accompanied Op 11 No 4 (1919), with its Romantic, almost Brahmsian opening 'Fantaisie', and (the pinnacle of the set, perhaps) the C major from 1939. What a fascinating listen they make.

Hearing the seven as a sequence – Hindemith did not compose them as such – adds a dimension to the music missing in Imai's and Power's sets, and squandered by ECM. In each work, Zimmermann has a quality of – well, 'rightness' is the only word I can use for it – that seems wholly at one with Hindemith's idiom, that no other player quite manages. The only equivalent that comes to mind is Paul Lewis's Beethoven sonatas, in which one almost hears the composer himself performing. With Zimmermann, she might just exceed Hindemith in execution.

Where does that place Zimmermann against her rivals? One can discount quickly Jürgen Weber, Enrique Santiago and Paul Cortese, generally too warm in tone without the edginess fundamental to this music. Zimmermann's tone is full but not over-rich, as if she herself had grown out of the instrument rather than learnt to play it. Her rendition with Thomas Hoppe of Op 11 No 4 is simply the best yet and that of the C major is on a par with Walter Trampler's wonderful RCA account (long deleted). The virtuoso distinctions between her, Imai and Power are negligible in truth, but her conception of the works in the round ultimately compels appreciation. With superb sound from Myrios, I must reluctantly, out of respect for Imai and Power – recommend this new set as quite simply the best.

Guy Rickards

GRAMOPHONE Archive

Fauré's Piano Trio, Op 120

Three earlier recordings of Fauré's searing late work – and how Gramophone rated them



AUGUST 1966

Fauré Piano Trio, Op 120

Lamar Crowson pf

Kenneth Sillito vn

Terence Weil vc

L'Oiseau-Lyre (SOL289)

(12in • 32s 3d)

Early and late Fauré on one disc. The idea of the coupling [with the C minor Piano Quartet] is excellent but the recorded outcome not altogether satisfactory. Curiously enough, it is the sparse and rarely heard Trio that gets the better performance, despite a rather wiry higher string tone that is common to both sides. There are patches of good recorded sound, just as there are longer stretches of fine ensemble-playing, but, on the whole, neither the piano nor string tone is beautiful on record. **Felix Aprahamian**



JUNE 1990

Fauré Piano Trio, Op 120

Beaux Arts Trio

Philips (F) 422 350-2PH (53' • DDD)

Peter Wiley's cello solo at the start is rightly interrogatory, and in some ways it sets the tone for much of what follows, quietly touching music that sticks in the mind, and if the playing in this work may occasionally seem understated that is not a serious fault. The recording made in The Maltings, Snape, offers mellow string sound while having impact where necessary, although the piano seems to me occasionally boxy. This new Philips issue makes for a welcome coupling [with the C minor Piano Quintet]. **Christopher Headington**



MARCH 2000

Fauré Piano Trio, Op 120

Florestan Trio

Hyperion (F) CDA67114 (66' • DDD)

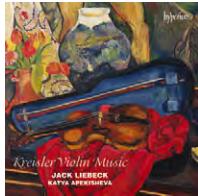
The Florestan generally adopt faster speeds and in the quicker movements Susan Tomes's playing is remarkably light and precise. The finale has a *scherzando* quality that throws into relief the seriousness of the strings' initial gesture. The string players are always ready to modify their sound to produce special expressive effects, such as the eerily quiet unison passage in the *Andante*. The Florestan's freshness, imagination and purposeful directness incline me to put them at the top of my list. **Duncan Druce**

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Selected comparison – coupled as above:
Kashkashian (10/88) (ECM) 833 309-2
Unaccompanied Sonatas – selected comparisons:
Imai (6/93) (BIS) BIS-CD571
Cortese (5/96) (ASV) CDDCA947
Power (5/10) (HYPE) CDA67769
Op 11 No 5, Op 25 No 1 – selected comparison:
Weber (12/13) (GENU) GEN13265
Sonatas with Pf – selected comparisons:
Imai, Pöntinen (9/94) (BIS) BIS-CD651
Cortese, Vilaprinjó (3/97) (ASV) CDDCA978
Power (8/09) (HYPE) CDA67721
Op 11 No 4, Op 25 No 4, 1939 – selected comparison:
Santiago, Randalu (10/98) (MDG)
MDG304 0691-2 and MDG304 0692-2 (oas)

Kreisler

Dvořák Slavonic Dance, Op 72 No 2 (arr Kreisler)
Falla Danse espagnole (from *La vida breve*, arr Kreisler) **Gluck** Mélodie (from *Orfeo ed Euridice*, arr Kreisler) **Kreisler** Praeludium and Allegro 'in the style of Pugnani'. Syncopation. Schön Rosmarin. Liebesleid. Liebesfreud. Polichinelle (Sérénade). Tambourin chinois, Op 3. Toy Soldiers' March. La chasse, 'Caprice' in the style of Cartier'. Caprice viennois, Op 2. Allegretto 'in the style of Boccherini'. Marche miniature viennoise. Recitativo and Scherzo, Op 6 **Tartini** Sonata, 'Il trillo del Diavolo'
Jack Liebeck vn Katya Apeksheva pf
Hyperion F CDA68040 (69' • DDD)



Fritz Kreisler (1875–1962), one of the most beloved musicians of the last century, is *sui generis*. In an 80th-birthday tribute to him, Erica Morini spoke for many when she said: 'You make this world a much more worthwhile one in which to live.' Exactly so. His recordings are one of life's great pleasures. Very few violinists have come close to equalling him in his inimitable miniatures. It's an even tougher challenge competing with him when 17 of them are presented in sequence, a form in which they were never intended to be heard.

Jack Liebeck is a fine player – no doubt about that – with a firm tone and rock-solid technique. The 1785 'Ex-Wilhelmi' Guadagnini he plays fills St George's, Bristol, with commanding ease. Strangely, he is best in Kreisler's transcriptions (a touching Gluck *Mélodie*, thrilling bravura in Falla's *Danse espagnole* and a forthright, confident account of the *Devil's Trill* Sonata, which ends the disc in style). But of that essential charm in the Kreisler originals there is but little. *Liebesfreud* is far too brusque and strident, and the jaunty waltz and march rhythms of *Caprice viennois* and *Marche miniature viennoise* lack the airy

nonchalance of the composer. Katya Apeksheva is an alert and most sensitive accompanist, sticking to her partner like a limpet, but has been placed too distantly from Liebeck. Kreisler's accompaniments are gems in themselves and can be heard more clearly in, for example, his 1926 recordings with Carl Lamson. So a good programme, two first-class musicians – but no competition for the composer in what is very much a studio recording.

Jeremy Nicholas

B Lang

Monadologie XII
Klangforum Wien / Johannes Kalitzke
GOD Records F ② (CD + ●) GOD16 (114' • DDD)



Bernhard Lang's title might lead you to think classic-period modernism but

Monadologie XII turns out to be a composer's re-visioning of jazz. We slip into terrain previously occupied by Stravinsky's *Ebony Concerto*, Milhaud's *La création du monde* and Bernstein's *Prelude, Fugue and Riffs*, but not entirely comfortably. Lang clearly has a healthy respect for jazz. He knows that an Austrian composer writing in 2011 had better keep some circumspect distance from his source material to avoid sponging off jazz's irresistibly charismatic surface and thereby becoming a dilettante. And it is this cool composerly distance, the hot inner workings of jazz revealed only gradually, that makes *Monadologie XII* such an unusually stimulating and emotionally uplifting experience.

But we're kept guessing. GOD Records issues *Monadologie XII* on vinyl (with a CD version discreetly tucked into the package). Stark white lettering imprinted against the jet-black grain of the double-fold LP cover offers no guidance apart from namechecking the 10 players of Klangforum Wien, and the first set of sounds you hear are appropriately ambiguous. An open-ended accordion chord frames an alto saxophone's hectic but subtone acrobatics. A trumpet stab and cymbal splash drop their bluesy clues. But this could equally be an ensemble composition happy to exist in the same world as Lachenmann or Spahlinger – especially when a piano asserts its disruptive presence.

Monadologie XII is already dealing in jazz before anybody particularly notices. Melodic cells are asserted and re-spun. Grooves appear in the cracks between

melodic lines determinately on the move. A mesmeric solo double-bass passage breaks free from the ensemble. Drum-kit patterns spark into life and abruptly fizzles out. Lang is breaking down the material basis of jazz to rebuild it in his own vision. Throwing around the weight of jazz cliché, which is how jazz-inspired composers tend to operate, is not his bag. Klangforum Wien have previously recorded *Monadologie VII* (Kairos, 3/11), which similarly filters and distils Schoenberg, the big difference here being that performative jazz sounds are not accessible from notated sources. And so Lang must rely on his ears – and he more than swings it.

Philip Clark

Leifs

'Eilifð / Eternity'
String Quartets – No 1, 'Mors et vita', Op 21; No 2, 'Vita et mors', Op 36; No 3, 'El Greco', Op 64
Members of the Reykjavík Chamber Orchestra
Smekkleysa F SMK81 (61' • DDD)



When the Yggdrasil Quartet's pioneering disc of Jón Leifs's three string quartets was released by BIS in 1995, I gave it a resoundingly warm welcome. Listening to their performances again (as I have from time to time in the intervening 19 years) only deepens my appreciation of these marvellously polished accounts of the Icelander's rough-hewn inspirations, the first two of which are rooted in tragedy.

This new account is in most respects no less affecting. The quartet of the Reykjavík Chamber Orchestra are expert players and treat the sometimes awkward-sounding idiom as if it were the most natural style on the planet – but then leader Rut Ingólfssdóttir is a leading exponent of Leifs's music. Their accounts are uniformly swifter than their BIS rivals, too, by respectively three, six and seven minutes. This gives Leifs's music a lightness and vitality that set its darker passages in stronger relief, most acutely in the Second, *Vita et mors* (1948–51), one of four compositions inspired by the accidental death of his estranged 17-year-old daughter, Líf. *Vita et mors* is her portrait ('líf', like 'vita', means 'life') from childhood to the brink of maturity. Its thematic ties with the heart-rending unaccompanied choral lullaby Requiem (a howl of anguish sung *sotto voce* so as not to disturb the dead child) give the music an extra poignancy that should not leave a dry eye in the house.



Simply the best: Tabea Zimmermann and her pianist Thomas Hoppe go straight to the top of the Hindemith viola sonata pile (review on page 47)

The other quartets – the First (1939) a reaction to Europe's ghastly slide into war, the Third (1965) a reaction to El Greco's art – comprise major additions to the genre and are strong enough musically to be interpreted in such different ways. I am hard-put to choose between either set, whether in performance quality or sound. They will both sit proudly on my shelf.

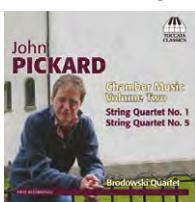
Guy Rickards

*Selected comparison – coupled as above:
Yggdrasil Qt (7/95) (BIS) BIS-CD691*

Pickard

'Chamber Music, Vol 2'
String Quartets – No 1; No 5

Brodowski Quartet
Toccata Classics ® TOCC0197 (64' • DDD)



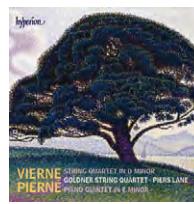
Here's further proof that John Pickard (b1962) is one of the most edifying and accomplished composers around. Toccata Classics gives us the First and most recent of his five string quartets. Dating from 1991 and acknowledged by its creator as a key work in his early development, the former is a 38-minute canvas of vaulting ambition

cast in 10 interlinked sections, admirably uncompromising and imbued with a probing sense of intrepid exploration, yet always enviably sure in its progress and full of the most absorbing dialogue between the four voices. If anything, the five-movement Fifth Quartet (completed 22 years later) proves an even more idiomatically assured and engrossing achievement, the harmonic idiom now rather less astringent but with ideas that are more sharply individual. Above all, Pickard's masterly writing evinces an entrancing wholeness, keen proportion and profoundly humane spirit that nourish both head and heart. Any listener familiar with the quartets of, say, Britten, Simpson, McCabe or David Matthews should waste no time in making this marvellous work's acquaintance.

The Brodowski Quartet lend this enormously rewarding repertoire thrillingly persuasive, spellbindingly eloquent advocacy, and their sterling efforts have been most naturally captured by Michael Ponder's microphones. Pickard himself pens a lucid and helpful booklet essay, which is prefaced by a highly personable and illuminating encomium from one of his composition pupils, Paul Mealor (b1975). Do try and hear this wholly admirable coupling. **Andrew Achenbach**

Pierné • Vierne

Pierné Piano Quintet, Op 41^a
Vierne String Quartet, Op 12
^aPiers Lane p/ Goldner Quartet
Hyperion ® CDA68036 (63' • DDD)



Brahms, Dvořák, Fauré, Franck, Schubert, Schumann... and perhaps Taneyev.

The list of indisputably great Romantic piano quintets may be a shortlist one. Arguably, Gabriel Pierné's isn't quite up there, but it would be hard to imagine a more persuasive or compelling performance than this one from the all-Australian line-up of the Goldner Quartet and Piers Lane.

It's a large-scale affair, of some 40 minutes, and it was written later than it sounds, in 1916. If Pierné the composer was rather overshadowed by his career as a conductor during his own lifetime, then we have no such excuse these days. As a former pupil of Massenet and Franck, his ability to handle large-scale structures is a given (and the quintet makes use of Franckian cyclic elements to give it coherence). The first movement opens in high seriousness, with



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an almost symphonic sense of scale. The danger inherent to this medium is that textures can become cloudy and clogged. Not here, though, where Pierné creates some markedly effulgent effects but never becomes overbearing. In the hands of these players the second movement, which uses the Basque form of a *zortzico*, characterised by five beats in a bar, has an appealing lilt. And they also judge expertly the slow introduction to the finale, while the *Allegro* proper has liveness, warmth and a constantly engaging sense of musical argument that prompts the question: why isn't this much more frequently played?

The Goldner couple it with the D minor Quartet of Louis Vierne, written when he was just 24, in the same year – 1894 – that Debussy changed the musical landscape with his *Prélude à L'après-midi d'un faune*. The quartet's neglect might be in part due to Vierne's overwhelming association with the organ but matters haven't been helped by the fact that the score wasn't published until the 1980s. What is striking is how attuned to the medium he is, and the work is full of wonderfully effective writing. The inner movements are particularly impressive: a febrile Intermezzo (airily despatched here) and an austere beautiful slow movement. With expert notes from Roger Nichols, this is a fascinating and eminently worthwhile addition to the catalogue. **Harriet Smith**

Ragnarsson

Adagio for String Sextet. Tengsl (Tendrils). Six Songs. Movement for String Quartet. Vocalise
Guðrún Jóhanna Ólafsdóttir *mez Marta*
Hrafnssdóttir *contr* Ólafur Kjartan Sigurðarson

members of the Reykjavík Chamber Orchestra
 Smekkleysa  SMK83 (70' • DDD)



Hjalmar Helgi Ragnarsson is one of the leading Icelandic composers of the middle generation, his first compositions dating from the mid-1970s. He came to wider notice, however, as an advocate for the music of Jón Leifs, a formative influence on Ragnarsson's early style, and author of a fine, brief history of music in Iceland. The string-sextet Adagio (1990) was written almost in homage to Leifs, its quiet progression of slow-moving chords echoing the less elemental side of the elder composer's creative personality.

The five works featured – two song-cycles, two substantial movements for strings and a quarter-hour *Vocalise* – are receiving their first recordings in any

format. They were composed between 1976 (*Movement* for string quartet) and 1998 (*Vocalise*), with the two song-cycles (both setting poems by Stefán Hörður Grímsson) dating from 1978–79 (Six Songs) and 1988 (*Tendrils*). Starkness of texture and seriousness of tone are recurrent features of these works, predominantly expressed in moderate tempi. When the music does get – fleetingly – more excitable, it does so without alleviating the prevailing heaviness of tone, as in the Six Songs, a *tour de force* of vocal expression traversing between the tragic and the sardonic. *Vocalise* is the exception, growing into a sensuous, often sun-filled quasi-theatrical tone-poem.

The eight members of the excellent Reykjavík Chamber Orchestra are on their mettle in this vivid, spiky, variegated music, ranging from the dense, slow-moving chords and lines of *Adagio* to the angular, fractured textures of the cycles. The restrained, atmospheric *Movement* for string quartet is in some senses the outsider, Ragnarsson's style not yet fully realised, although satisfying on its own terms. Fine sound from Smekkleysa. One for contemporary collectors, perhaps, but well worth investigating. **Guy Rickards**

Sarasate

'Transcriptions and Arrangements'
JS Bach Suite No 3, BWV1068 – Air **Chopin**
 Nocturnes – No 2, Op 9 No 2; No 8, Op 27 No 2.
 Waltzes – No 3, Op 34 No 2; No 4, Op 34 No 3;
 No 8, Op 64 No 3 **Guignon** Sonata No 1 – Allegro
Handel Serse – Largo **Leclair** Violin Sonata, Op 9
 No 3 – Sarabande; Tambourin **Mondonville**
 Sonata No 5 – La chasse **Moszkowski** Guitarra,
 Op 45 No 2 **Raff** La fée d'amour **Sarasate**
 Souvenirs de Faust (Gounod) **Senaille** Sonata
 No 9 – Allegro (all arr/transcr Sarasate)
Tianwa Yang *vn* **Markus Hadulla** *pft*
 Naxos  8 572709 (80' • DDD)



This is the eighth disc of Sarasate that the violinist Tianwa Yang has recorded for Naxos. It has the great merit of including a high proportion of popular favourites, making it something of a fun record, given the brilliant performances of this duo.

The opening item, Moszkowski's *Guitarra*, sets the pattern in bringing out Wang's virtuoso playing in imitations of the guitar, with plentiful *pizzicatos*. There follows a splendid group of Chopin transcriptions, three favourite Waltzes and two of the best-loved of the Nocturnes. Though Sarasate stays close to Chopin's

originals, he adds various spectacular passages specially suited to the violin. Yang's range of violin tone and dynamic is consistently seductive here and throughout the disc.

Next comes Sarasate's potpourri *Souvenirs de Faust*, with Gounod's principal tunes given a spectacular setting, and with the piano as well as the violin given brilliant passages. The Waltz is deliciously pointed, while the celebrated Soldiers' March brings plentiful double-stopping. Of the transcriptions of pieces by Guignon, Mondonville and Leclair, the most attractive is Leclair's 'Tambourin'.

The next item reflects the period when Handel's *Largo* was very popular, with no mention that it comes from the opera *Serse*. Similarly, the Air from Bach's Suite No 3 in D was always known as the 'Air on the G string'. Sarasate's arrangements of both pieces beautifully ring the changes of pitch and dynamic, with passages involving melodies on high harmonics. The Handel begins and ends effectively with the piano alone, making the late entry of the violin even more seductive.

The last item is a fantasy piece, *La fée d'amour*. At nearly 18 minutes it is much the longest item but by no means the most interesting. Yet Sarasate, so the note tells us, regarded it as his favourite concert item, no doubt because it allowed him to exploit his virtuosity to the full. Altogether a delightful disc, beautifully recorded in well-balanced sound. **Edward Greenfield**

J Végh

Three String Quartets
Authentic Quartet
 Hungaroton  HCD32726 (74' • DDD)



It's most pleasant to meet an unknown composer from the past. János Végh (1845–1918) came from an aristocratic family and became Justice of the Hungarian Supreme Court, but music remained a dominant interest throughout his life. These string quartets have never been published; their regular form reveals a composer keen to follow classical traditions and a generally intimate tone suggests they may have been aimed at gifted amateur performers, rather than the concert hall. However, Végh's command of complex chromatic harmony shows a composer in touch with the progressive trends of his time (he was a friend of Liszt and attended the 1876 premiere of *The Ring*), and the quartets show no traces of amateurishness.

I particularly enjoyed the first movements and *andantes* of the quartets in D and in G minor, where Végh goes beyond inventiveness and expertise to create structures with emotional power. The *Andante* of the D major work contrasts a tranquil, somewhat Schumann-esque opening with an intensely passionate middle section.

Another fascinating piece is the 'Serenatina' in the F major Quartet, a playful movement featuring a theme exploiting *portamentos*, alternating with Mendelssohnian quick passages. I imagine that Végh will have indicated these slides, elegantly executed by the Authentic Quartet. Elsewhere, however, the group eschews the use of *portamento*, ubiquitous in 19th-century string-playing, and intended to bring out the emotional content of the music. As a result, despite beautifully blended sound, the performances sound less 'authentic' than they might. But this shouldn't put you off sampling some distinctive and enjoyable music, very well presented. **Duncan Druce**

Mainz Virtuosi

Arnold Double Concerto, Op 77

Atterberg Suite, Op 19 No 1 Kleiberg Aske

Seabourne This is a song for you alone

Mainz Virtuosi

Sheva Contemporary (SH091) (53' • DDD)



The Mainz Virtuosi are a multinational string ensemble comprising fellow

students at the Hochschule für Musik in Mainz. As they are all young prize-winners starting out on their careers, they have more of a predilection for *concertante* pieces than for the chamber music one might expect of a disc of this type. Of the repertoire here, only the Arnold Double Concerto is played with any regularity. The rest is a cornucopia of rarities of real beauty: Ståle Kleiberg's *Aske* ('Ashes') is a depiction of Edvard Munch's painting of the same name and provides the prelude to a disc that has a strong compounding sense of familiarity running through it.

Despite the almost symphonic quality of the orchestration of the pieces here, the intimacy of the actual ensemble is handled sensitively and with mature reciprocity – this is particularly evident in the second movement of Peter Seabourne's two-movement concerto *This is a song for you alone*. Ultimately, though, this disc showcases two young violinists, Agnes Langer and Irina Borissova, and at no point

on the disc is their talent for musical storytelling so evident as in the opening of the Arnold. They roll responsively with the music, allowing it to unfold as it wants to – one minute rough and uneven, the next smooth and conciliatory – within a strange conflation of styles simultaneously reminiscent of Peter Warlock and his frank, free-spirited Englishness, and, at times, music of the Italian Baroque.

Caroline Gill

'An Amadeus Affair'

Anderson/Roe Ragtime alla turca (after K331)

Busoni Duettino concertante (after K459) Liszt Réminiscences de Don Juan, S418 Mozart Così fan tutte - Soave sia il vento (arr Anderson/Roe)

Sonata for Two Pianos, K448. Die Zauberflöte - Chorale Prelude ('Der, welcher wandert diese Strasse', arr Anderson/Roe)

Anderson & Roe Piano Duo

Steinway & Sons (STNS30022) (66' • DDD)



(Greg) Anderson and (Elizabeth Joy) Roe, a thirty-something

American piano duo, are not prone to self-deprecation. They are apparently 'revolutionizing the classical piano experience for the 21st century' and 'have captivated audiences around the world with their adrenalized performances'. The revolution has yet to reach this neck of the woods but I was captivated by most of this impressive recording of (mostly) Mozart arrangements.

Duettino concertante, Busoni's fairly faithful treatment of the last movement of K459, provides a sparkling curtain-raiser that segues into the duo's own convincing two-piano adaptation of the Trio from Act 1 of *Così fan tutte*. The tonal balance of the two pianos is remarkably uniform and the recorded sound, as on a previous Steinway label disc I reviewed ('Get Happy' from Jenny Lin – 8/13), sumptuously plush. Paradoxically, this detracts somewhat from the only original Mozart item on the disc, the great D major Sonata for two pianos. Here I miss the separation of the two pianists that is part of the sheer fun of the piece. Its witty banter is served better by the less bass-heavy, brisker tempi and incisive attack of the benchmark recording by Tal & Groethuysen.

More *Così fan tutte* follows in *Grand Scherzo*, the duo's duet arrangement based on the final 12 minutes or so of Act 1, succeeded by Liszt's two-piano version of his *Réminiscences de Don Juan*, a test for ensemble precision if ever there was one and which Anderson & Roe pass with

flying colours, sensitively paced and ultimately exhilarating. The cherry on top is *Ragtime alla turca*, an 'adrenalized performance' that chimes with Greg and Elizabeth Joy's booklet declaration: 'Amadeus, you rock us.'

Jeremy Nicholas

K448 – selected comparison:

Tal, Groethuysen (10/06⁸) (SONY) 82876 74655-2

'A piacere'

Alqhai El canto de los pájaros JS Bach Solo Violin Sonata No 2, BWV1003 - Andante

Marais La guitare. Les voix humaines

de Murcia Fandango Rameau Les Sauvages

M de Sainte-Colombe Allemande. Les pleurs.

Sarabande Sanz Canarios. Marizápalos.

Passacalle Satriani Always with me, always with you (all arr Alqhai)

Fahmi Alqhai va da gamba Accademia del Piacere

Glossa (GCDP33202) (54' • DDD)



With origins in the music of Moorish Spain, German chamber music, Italian courtly life and even early flamenco, the viola da gamba is the perfect vehicle for the musical tapestry of Fahmi Alqhai's extraordinary disc. Although, along with his group Accademia del Piacere, he specialises in music of the Italian Seicento, what he does with the hybrid pieces on this disc – combining that core repertoire with flamenco and elements that reflect his Syrian-Palestinian-Spanish heritage – brings the instrument into a new realm of joyful potential.

There is a breathiness to the opening *Marizápalos* (a combination of Alqhai's own work and that of the 17th-century Spanish guitar composer Gaspar Sanz) that has more in common with performance on early cello than gamba, and it is much the idiosyncratically richer for it. The subsequent *Fandango* (a similar amalgam) is contrastingly razor-sharp and is the first in the disc's show-reel of contrasts. There is plenty here to remind us that the gamba is an instrument of essentially melancholy character, but that is through the dignified performances of the works on this disc that were written before the instrument's development was curtailed by the advent of the flashier cello. *Les pleurs*, the baseline of gamba repertoire, is as accomplished a performance as you could expect, confirming Alqhai as a master of the instrument; but inasmuch as the gamba was never truly standardised as an instrument, the rest is a merry tribute to all it could have been, and can still be. **Caroline Gill**



Berkeleys play Berkeley: the ensemble record contrasting octets by British composers including their namesake at the Church of St Peter and St Paul, Chacombe

‘Ciaccona’

**Chaconnes by JS Bach, Blow, G Böhm, Bury,
Chambonnieres, L Couperin, Duphly,
JCF Fischer, Fux and B Storace**
Guillermo Brachetta *hpds*

Resonus ⑧ ➔ RES10126 (64' • DDD)



In a few works on this fascinating recording, one can hear perhaps a few faint echoes of the

rollicking and erotically charged *chacona*, a dance that crossed the Atlantic from the New World and insinuated itself into popular Spanish culture in the 16th century. Bernardo Storace's mid-17th-century Ciaccona has the high spirits and tart rhythmic profile of what the original, improvisatory form may have sounded like, and Georg Böhm's much more domesticated Chaconne (likely written decades later) has a piquant tendency to harmonic instability and strange, other-worldly chromatic twists. But by the time the *chacona* had become a staple of the instrumental repertoire – defined by its repeating bass-line and often indistinguishable from the passacaglia – it was more a formal challenge to composers than a libidinal invitation to the dance.

The most famous, of course, is Bach's great Chaconne from the Partita in D minor for solo violin. A version of that is heard here, transposed and in an arrangement that borrows from transcriptions by Lars Ulrik Mortensen and Gustav Leonhardt. Harpsichordist Guillermo Brachetta's performance of the Bach is one of the few disappointments on this otherwise delightful disc. The celebrity of the Bach may have hindered his sense of freedom, and the arrangement is relatively literal and doesn't take advantage of the instrument's full capacities. In any case, it lacks the expressive freedom and majesty of the work played by a great violinist, though it has moments of brilliance.

No matter. There are many compensating delights, and the range of works demonstrates the flexibility of the form and the ingenuity of the composers. There's no comparison with the integrated, long-form arch that Bach achieves but Johann Joseph Fux's wonderfully florid and virtuoso Ciaccona is worked out on an almost equally grand scale. French contributions include a melancholy little character piece by Chambonnières and an expansively regal account by Duphly.

By crossing national and stylistic boundaries (John Blow is also present

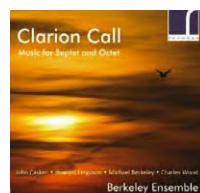
here), and including works from the mid-16th to well into the 17th century, Brachetta sets himself a considerable interpretative challenge. But his playing is fluent, his characterisations lively and idiomatic, and his use of two different instruments, one bright and light, the other with a smokier timbre, helps give definition to the several works. He is most at home in the French works, and the disc's final track, by Louis Couperin, is a highlight. It also seems to be the work most likely to have been in Bach's ear when he wrote his masterpiece.

Philip Kennicott

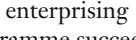
‘Clarion Call’

**M Berkeley Clarion Call and Gallop Casken Blue
Medusa Ferguson Octet, Op 4 C Wood Septet
Berkeley Ensemble**

Resonus ® ➔ RES10127 (76' • DDD)



Berkeley Ensemble



This enterprising programme succeeds through the strength of its contrasts. The opening, bright astringency of Michael Berkeley's *Clarion Call and Gallop* (2013) put me in mind of *Wild Bells*, which



Perspectives 6

Beethoven Piano Sonatas No. 10, Op. 14

and No. 30, Op. 109

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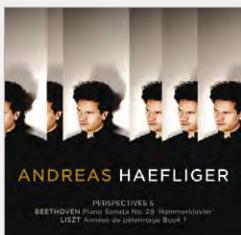
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Jonathan Aasgaard, cello

Martin Roscoe, piano

Principal cellist of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra Jonathan Aasgaard, together with pianist Martin Roscoe, performs the complete music for cello and piano by Brahms, including the Sonatas plus transcriptions of the composer's F-A-E Scherzo, Hungarian Dances, Lieder, First Violin Sonata and the Andante of the Second Piano Concerto.



AV 2300 (2 CDs)



ARTIST MANAGEMENT

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4x4

Brodsky Quartet



'In the South', 'New World Quartets' and a Brahms disc with Michael Collins all recently released by Chandos Records to great critical acclaim. Shostakovich Cycle in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane in July 2013.

Endellion String Quartet



The Endellion String Quartet's recent Britten release has received 'Album of the Week' in the Sunday Times, 'Chamber Choice' in BBC Music Magazine and 'Editor's Choice' in Classical Music Magazine. Resident at the University of Cambridge.

Escher String Quartet



BBC New Generation Artists 2010-12 with BBC Proms debut in 2012 and regular Wigmore Hall appearances. Season Artists of The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center in New York and awarded the Avery Fisher Career Grant in 2013.

Kelemen Quartet



Formed in Budapest in 2010 and led by Hungarian violinist Barnabás Kelemen. Awarded three prizes at the Melbourne International Chamber Music Competition in 2011, resulting in major Australian tour, and winner of the 2012 International Sándor Végh String Quartet Competition.

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concludes another fine and recent Resonus album devoted to the organ works of Berkeley father and son. Insistence is a lasting quality of Berkeley's music – you can't take it or leave it – and you find it here in the nagging memorability of the opening call as well as the subtly redirected energy of the gallop.

That insistence is the one note that strikes me as slightly false in the final Tarantella of the marvellous Octet (1933) by Howard Ferguson, which is music of ready appeal and slow satisfaction, though it would be a mistake to call it Brahmsian, any more than it's Tchaikovskian for doing something with the famous horn tune of the Fifth Symphony: hardly more than one listening should convince you of Ferguson's high craft as he works within Schubert's Octet texture, as should the vibrancy of the Berkeley Ensemble's performance even compared with Dennis Brain and friends in the work's first recording.

Bassoonist Andrew Watson takes centre stage in *Blue Medusa* (2002), which John Casken rearranged from bassoon and piano to octet, thereby drawing out the sinuous lines of the solo and setting them loose within a dark and threatening swell.

Stravinsky's Septet, organised along Schoenbergian lines of counterpoint, would have pulled together the threads of the programme. Instead we have Charles Wood's Septet, stringing out hearts-of-oak melodies with jolly-jack-tar rhythms that suggest to me a composer at the age of 23 understandably still searching for something to say and a personal way of saying it – which he came to find in his justly more famous church music. Still, this premiere recording satisfies a plea from a *Gramophone* reader, 86 years after the event: somewhere out there, I hope he's pleased. **Peter Quantrill**

Ferguson – selected comparison:

Brain et al (11/43⁸, 12/95) (DUTT) CDAX8014

'Duos Duetto Duos'

Martinú Three Madrigals **Mozart** Duos - K423;

K424 Penderecki Ciaccona in memoriam

Giovanni Paolo II **Spohr** Duo, Op 13

Evgenia-Maria Popova vs **Dimitar Penkov** va

Roméo (F) 7301 (79' • DDD)



The duo for violin and viola, as perfected in Mozart's two examples, is a particularly satisfying form. The instruments are so close in timbre and weight of tone as to blend perfectly, yet each has its distinctive voice, suggesting a

dialogue between two characters. The Bulgarian duo of Evgenia-Maria Popova and Dimitar Penkov have the confidence, vigour and virtuosity to present these dialogues convincingly; entirely so in the two more modern works. The Martinú comes across particularly well: the two players clearly relish its continual stream of manic inventiveness and give their performance a rhythmic buoyancy that compels the listener's attention.

The elaborate double-stopping of the Spohr, often resulting in complex four-part harmony, presents no problems for these players – there are places where we feel we might be listening to a well-balanced, finely tuned string quartet. This performance is, however, somewhat spoilt by frequent fierce accents, at odds with the music's generally elegant, decorative style. The effect is exaggerated by a close, airless recording. And in the Mozart, despite the high tonal and technical quality of the playing, I missed the subtle shaping of phrases that gives his music its natural life and expression. In the *Andante* of K424, for example, Popova places emphasis on the projection and fine quality of each individual note, rather than on the rise and fall of the melodic line. An admirably varied programme of music, then, but the performances give variable satisfaction. However, I can thoroughly recommend the Penderecki and the Martinú. **Duncan Druce**

'French Music for Winds'

Barber Summer Music, Op 31 **Hindemith** Kleine Kammermusik, Op 24 No 2 **Ibert** Trois Pièces brèves **Jolivet** Sonatine for Oboe and Bassoon

Ligeti Six Bagatelles **Milhaud** La cheminée du roi René, Op 205 **Ravel** Le tombeau de Couperin (transcr Mason Jones) **Taffanel** Wind Quintet

Veress Sonatina for Oboe, Clarinet and Bassoon

Zemlinsky Humoreske (Rondo)

Les Vents Français

Warner Classics (B) 2564 63484-5 (118' • DDD)



The perky dialogue between oboe and bassoon in André Jolivet's *Sonatine* of 1963, while falling outside the general wind-quintet orbit of this two-disc set, also yields up one of its most entertaining curiosities. There is clearly some sort of narrative at work here. Starting off in unison, the two instruments then pose questions, make terse comments, discuss things animatedly, enjoy a languid doze in the *récitatif* of the second movement and then wake up full of the joys of spring in the finale. It's a fun little piece, only eight

minutes long but beautifully crafted and full of zestful character. It is also played with a keen spirit by François Leleux and Gilbert Audin, two of the performers who have come together to mine that rich seam of French wind ensemble-writing in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and, on the second disc, to explore the repertoire more widely.

The most substantial work on the first disc is the Wind Quintet of 1876 by Paul Taffanel, a flautist/composer whose inside knowledge of the instruments lends the music a refined blend of timbres within an idiom of suave Gallic charm, no more, no less. Turning immediately to the second disc, Ligeti's Six Bagatelles of 1956 offer a complete contrast in the vibrancy, transparency and wit of the music, with not a note wasted in these compact miniatures of scintillating invention, colour and rhythmic pungency. Zemlinsky's Mahler-imbued *Humoreske* and Barber's sun-drenched *Summer Music* offer a pool of repose before the lively astringency of Veress's 1933 Sonatina for oboe, clarinet and bassoon and, finally, Hindemith's *Kleine Kammermusik*, Op 24 No 2, of 1922. Variety of style is a winning suit of this set, played throughout with terrific aplomb.

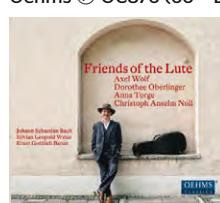
Geoffrey Norris

'Friends of the Lute'

JS Bach Sonata, BWV1025 (arr Weiss)^a **Baron** Concerto for Flute and Lute^b **Weiss** Fantasias – in B flat; in C. Concert for Lute and Mandolin (reconstr Löhr)^c. Chaconne in A

Axel Wolf lute with **Dorothee Oberlinger** fl

Christoph Anselm Noll hpd^d **Anna Torge** mand Oehms (OC876 (66' • DDD)



A fictitious letter excerpted in the booklet-notes to this attractive release paints a scene in which WF Bach 'brings about an encounter' between three men – JS Bach, Silvius Leopold Weiss and the latter's student, one Herr Kropffgans. What follows is a Baroque jam session of sorts, with Bach on harpsichord, Weiss on lute and Kropffgans on mandolin. Apparently such a meeting did take place, though the letter writer wasn't around to witness it. It's a lovely image, and one that opens up all sorts of possibilities for a musical programme which in this case includes the alto recorder of Dorothee Oberlinger, who joins lutenist Axel Wolf and co for a delightful *Musikabend*.

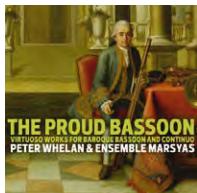
Wolf separates the chamber works with some of Weiss's lugubrious, improvisatory

solo lute pieces, dispatching them with stylish sensitivity. For Weiss's Concerto for lute and mandolin, which has been reconstructed from a work originally written for lute and transverse flute, Wolf is joined by Anna Torge, whose mandolin provides a delicate timbral contrast while also evoking the sweetness of the wooden flute.

The sweetness of Oberlinger's recorder doesn't have to be imagined in Ernst Gottlieb Baron's Concerto for flauto dolce and lute – nor does her considerable dexterity, which animates a charming if unremarkable work. Much more substantial is Weiss's arrangement for lute and harpsichord of Bach's Sonata BWV1025, the rippling figurations and melodic interplay of the two plucked yet highly contrasting instruments giving Wolf and harpsichordist Christoph Anselm Noll much to sink their teeth into. **William Yeoman**

'The Proud Bassoon'

Anonymous Les gentils airs - La Furstemberg; Les Sauvages; Tamborin (both arr Rameau)
Boismortier Sonatas, Op 50 - No 1; No 2
F Couperin Les goûts-réunis - Treizième Concert
Dubourg Eileen Aroon **Fasch** Sonata, FaWV N:C1
Telemann Sonata, TWV41:f1
Peter Whelan bn Ensemble Marsyas
Linn F CKD435 (60' • DDD/DSD)



Peter Whelan is striving zealously to explode the preconceptions

the bassoon is subjected to. This programme of 18th-century music – almost all of it French and German – demonstrates the bassoon's capabilities to conjure a variety of colours and moods that any serious-minded artist can be proud of. Indeed, it was the early-18th-century theorist and composer Johann Mattheson who described the bassoon as a 'proud' instrument, and Whelan's evangelical booklet essay compares its expressive potential to the heroic *haute-contre* voice of French Baroque opera.

One imagines Rameau wouldn't have needed much persuading about this, and two arrangements by him are among the set of popular opera arias that launch this beguiling and kaleidoscopic survey. My jaw dropped at the dexterous virtuosity of Whelan's playing at the conclusion of 'Les Sauvages'. The beautifully melodic opening *Largo* of Boismortier's Sonata (No 2) in G major provides a significant change of pace and mood; the concluding *Giga* is fantastic fun. Sonatas by Fasch and

Telemann vie for the status of the first known bassoon sonata but more importantly they each show the juxtaposition between ardent singing qualities and flexible brilliance in Whelan's playing. Accompaniment is delightfully varied from harpsichordist Philippe Grisvard, theorist Thomas Dunford and cellist Sarah McMahon, whose duets with Whelan in the *Treizième Concert* from Couperin's *Les goûts-réunis* are transfixing. Baroque chamber music showcasing solo bassoon might not sound like an obvious winner but in the event it's a triumph.

David Vickers

'Through the Looking Glass'

Abrahamsen Flowersongs. Schnee - Canon 2a
Nørgård Heyday's Night. Isternia
Ruders Carnival. Star Prelude and Love Fugue
Sørensen Looking on Darkness
Alpha

Dacapo © 8 226579 (57' • DDD)



Transcription is an art easily taken for granted in post-war music, making the inventiveness of a group such as Alpha the more striking. Its latest disc focuses on works by four leading Danish composers, beginning in the jazzy minimalism of Poul Ruders's *Star Prelude and Love Fugue* for piano (1990), with the Baroque stylisms of Per Nørgård's *Heyday's Night* (1981) more recalcitrant than in the original for recorder, cello and harpsichord. Two pieces by Hans Abrahamsen survey the extent of his composing, from the limpid detachment of the flute trio *Flowersongs* (1973) to the heady canonic syncopation of *Canon 2a* from his compendious work for chamber ensemble, *Schnee* (2008). Originally for solo accordion, Bent Sørensen's *Looking on Darkness* (2000) sounds much darker and also more elusive in this incarnation, while Ruders's effervescent *Carnival* (1980) – originally for flute and bongos – ought to be an ideal curtain-raiser for Alpha recitals. By the same token, Nørgård's *Isternia* (1979) could well be a fine ending – the astringent sonorities of what was initially conceived for cimbalom having unexpected eloquence as recorder, saxophone and percussion ruminatively alternate.

Alpha's playing is as secure in soloistic as in ensemble terms, and it has been caught to ideal effect in the warmly atmospheric acoustic of Hørsholm Church. Paul Hillier contributes a brief introductory note: those wanting more information on individual

pieces should look online but the point of this release is surely its continuity as an overall recital – in which respect it is not to be found wanting. **Richard Whitehouse**

'Vibrez'

JS Bach Prelude, BWV880 **Barber** Adagio, Op 11

Liszt La lugubre gondola, S200 No 2

Mendelssohn Ave Maria, Op 23 No 2 **Schubert**

Schwanengesang, D957 - No 1, Liebesbotschaft; No 4, Ständchen; No 5, Aufenthalt **Sollima**

Violoncelles, vibrez! **Wagner** Tristan und Isolde - Prelude **Wieniawski** Scherzo-Tarantelle, Op 16

Cellophony

Edition Classics © EDN1047 (59' • DDD)



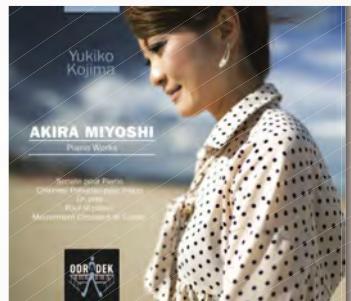
Cellophony are a talented octet of young British cellists who for their second CD have put together a well-balanced programme of transcriptions as well as including one attractive contemporary work. Most are palpable hits, a couple of them near misses.

'Vibrez' may be the name of the CD but it opens with the Prelude to *Tristan and Isolde*, where the straight, vibrato-less tone of the cellos is the defining characteristic of a searing performance, the forthcoming drama pitched on a precipice before it takes off on that *pizzicato* chord at bar 17. Barber's Adagio is a natural for inclusion and Cellophony's performance draws the listener inwards as if in a conversation. The group are adept at getting round the tricky figuration of the Wieniawski showpiece, and in the contrasting Venetian scene of *La lugubre gondola* they catch the desolate tone of Liszt's late composition that anticipated Wagner's death in the city. The Bach Prelude in F flows unobtrusively, the tempo easing off as a natural response for the return of the opening subject. In Mendelssohn's lovely *Ave Maria*, they could have made more of the drama in the supplicant calls of the middle section. Cellophony add a charming countermelody to the return of the main refrain in 'Ständchen' but the transcriptions of Schubert's other Lieder fare less well: the busy demi-semiquaver accompaniment muddies the rippling waters in 'Liebesbotschaft' and likewise the personal drama in 'Aufenthalt'. *Violoncelles, vibrez!* by Giovanni Sollima was composed in 1993. It is an appealing piece of minimalism, the thrice-repeated lyrical tune rising up to the highest register in an engaging manner.

The unanimity of the playing and the diverse nature of these performances make this Cellophony CD exceptional.

Adrian Edwards

Odradek, celebrating two years, together



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Smetana Quartet

Tully Potter remembers one of the greatest string quartets, champions of the Czech repertoire and interpreters who scaled new heights in the core string quartet literature

Although I knew some of their recordings, my first live encounter with the Smetana Quartet was a revelation. On the afternoon of Sunday January 26, 1969, at Queen Elizabeth Hall, they played Beethoven's Op 18 No 2, Janáček's *Intimate Letters* and Smetana's *From My Life* from memory, with extraordinary intensity. After many curtain calls, we knew an encore was due, because Antonín Kohout brought his cello back on stage. He also had a piece of music, but no stand on which to place it. To general laughter he laid it on the floor, then announced: 'Beethoven, in memory Czech student Jan Palach.'

They played the *Lento* from Beethoven's Op 135 – in tribute to the young man who immolated himself in Wenceslas Square as a protest against the 1968 Russian

invasion – and leader Jiří Novák silenced our applause with a few swishes of his bow. We stood as they left the stage, then staggered out into the sunlight, overcome.

Smetana Quartet concerts were like that. They started a programme as if they had already been playing for an hour – never 'playing themselves in', as some do. They told me that sitting close together, without music stands intervening, assisted concentration; and when, in 1974, they reverted to playing everything except their Czech warhorses from the music, so as to expand their repertoire, the glasses that three of them wore made a further barrier. Their exhilarating rhythm started where their rivals left off: in Beethoven's Op 18 No 6, or Shostakovich's Third, or Dvořák's *American*, they could virtually lift you out of your seat with their verve.

Their story began in 1941, when Kohout joined fellow Prague Conservatory student Václav Neumann's amateur ensemble. Under Josef Mika's guidance, the group developed until by 1944 the line-up of Neumann, Jaroslav Rybenský, Lubomír Kostecký and Kohout were performing as the Chamber Association

'Their exhilarating rhythm started where their rivals left off...they could virtually lift you out of your seat with their verve'

of the Prague Conservatory of Music. Then Václav Neumann, bent on conducting, asked to change to viola: Rybensk moved up to lead and Kostecký became the ideal second fiddle. To let Rybensk focus on his new role, the others joined the Czech Philharmonic, splitting their earnings four ways.

In 1945 Rybensk, Kostecký, Neumann and Kohout made their debut as the Smetana Quartet. 'We wanted to be a Czech quartet,' said Kohout. 'Our ideal was the Czech character of Smetana's music.' They finished with his *From My Life*, which they would repeat thousands of times. In 1947 Václav Neumann finally opted for conducting – he later headed the Czech Philharmonic – and Rybensk switched to viola to

let in Jiří Novák as leader. The final change in formation came when Rybensk fell ill in 1955 and Dr Milan Škampa, brilliant violinist and Janáček scholar, took the viola chair, learning a dozen works by heart within weeks. Virtually overnight, a very good quartet became a great one. In 1973 the Smetanas invited Josef Suk III to participate in a regular quintet, playing first viola. The quartet disbanded in 1989, having been mainly responsible for establishing Janáček's quartets and Smetana's D minor in the repertoire.

Almost 50 years cover the Smetanas' myriad recordings, starting on 78rpm in 1950 with Smetana's D minor and ending with their farewell concerts in Prague and Brno. Good things for Supraphon with Rybensk as viola included both Janáčeks, a sublime Mozart Clarinet Quintet (with Vladimír Ríha) and Dvořák's Piano Quintet (with Jan Panenka). With Škampa their studio career took off, although Pragokoncert charged Western labels high royalties. A 1956 Mozart disc for Columbia was followed by two Beethovens

DEFINING MOMENTS

• November 6, 1945 – *The Quartet forms*

Jaroslav Rybenský, Lubomír Kostecký, Václav Neumann and Antonín Kohout make their début as the Smetana Quartet at Prague Municipal Library, with Smetana's Second Quartet, Novák's Second, with its opening slow fugue, and Smetana's E minor, *From My Life*.

• Summer 1949 – *Playing without the music*

Inspired by the pre-war Kolisch Quartet and their friends the Quartetto Italiano, the Smetanas start playing their quartet repertoire from memory, using printed parts only for quintets and sextets. Their example is followed by the Janáček Quartet of Brno.

• January 1956 – *All change, for the last time*

The quartet undergoes its last personnel change, when Milan Škampa comes in as viola player, making crucial differences to its tonal profile and musical approach.

• April 24–26, 1972 – *The Smetanas go DDD*

At Aoyama Tower Hall, Tokyo, the Smetanas make the very first digital – or PCM – classical recordings, Mozart's *Hunt*, K458, and D minor, K421. Ten years later they re-record them in Prague to mark a decade of digital sound.



Smetana Quartet: (left to right) Antonín Kohout,
Jiří Novák, Lubomír Kostecký, Milan Škampa

PHOTOGRAPHY: THE TULLY POTTER COLLECTION

and Mendelssohn's Octet (with the Janáček Quartet) for Westminster and a marvellous 1965-73 EMI sequence, now on Testament, including both Janáčeks, two Dvořáks and the *Terzetto*, two Haydns, two Mozarts, Brahms's B flat, Schubert's E flat and the Dvořák and Schumann piano quintets (with Pavel Štepán). All this time they were making acclaimed discs for Supraphon, among them both Smetanas, eight Beethovens, Schubert's *Trout* (with Panenka and František Pota), Dvořák's E flat Quintet (with Suk), Prokofiev's First and Shostakovich's Third. Every summer at their north Bohemian retreats they learnt new Czech music and among the recorded results were fine works by Sommer, Feld, Pauer, Eben and Macha.

Sadly some of their best recordings, made digitally for Denon in 1972-89, have never been issued in Britain, notably

the Mozart quintets (with Suk) – as beautiful as Grumiaux and Co, but with more backbone – and a Beethoven cycle. Many live recordings and a superb Supraphon DVD are some compensation. While their Smetana is definitive, my essential choice is the Janáček performance which turned me on to Czech music 46 years ago. **G**



THE ESSENTIAL RECORDING

Dvořák String Quartet No 14. *Terzetto*
Janáček String Quartet No 2, 'Intimate Letters'
Smetana Quartet
Testament ® SBT1075

Instrumental



Harriet Smith reviews a French pianist's first disc for Erato: 'Chamayou surmounts the work's demands without ever leaving you feeling as if you've been punched in the face' ▶ **REVIEW ON PAGE 62**



Jed Distler opens Ashkenazy's complete Rachmaninov box: 'No qualifications are necessary when discussing this pianist's heartfelt affinity for this composer' ▶ **REVIEW ON PAGE 69**

JS Bach

Solo Cello Suites - No 1, BWV1007; No 3, BWV1009; No 5, BWV1011

Ditta Rohmann VC

Hungaroton Ⓜ HCD32731 (67' • DDD)



Let's hope that this debut recording by the prize-winning Hungarian cellist Ditta

Rohmann is the first of a two-disc set. With her musicologist's hat on she has carefully researched the texts, giving particular weight to the differences found in the autograph version for lute of the Fifth Suite. With her performer's hat on she has taken a pragmatic approach to her instrument, a modern French cello fitted with metal strings but tuned to 415Hz, and opted for a Baroque bow. She describes her compromise as 'subjective historical authenticity' influenced by 'present-day perspective', and it works extremely well.

These are stylish but unselfconscious interpretations. The tempi are well chosen, the phrasing informed by the harmony, the repeats nicely varied and the sense of *petite reprises* at the ends of sections delightfully savoured. Rohmann appreciates the value of a Baroque bow in this repertoire and uses hers eloquently.

The C major Suite (No 3) provides ample illustration: the opening of the Prélude flows like quicksilver into the arpeggiated passage, which is exquisitely clear in its articulation. Rohmann surprises and delights by gently stroking the thirds in the first section of the Allemande, then producing lovely, subtle *staccato* in the Courante. In the Sarabande and elsewhere she is at ease with the decay of the sound in longer down-bow strokes, and conjures here a beautifully controlled, delicate wistfulness. The G major Suite (No 1) provides many similar moments.

Having tuned down the top string to G for the C minor Suite (No 5), Rohmann draws lovely dark tones from her instrument, especially in the Prélude and

Sarabande. But she saves the best for last, by making the Gigue sing. Longing to hear more! **Julie Anne Sadie**

Guerau

'Complete Works for Solo Guitar'

Xavier Diaz-Latorre *gtr*

Passacaille Ⓜ ③ PAS998 (3h 5' • DDD)



Recorded between 2010 and 2013, the three discs that comprise this box-set open up for the listener a strange, intricate musical world in which one of the greatest composers for the Baroque guitar, Francisco Guerau (1649-1722), attempts to dignify an instrument the qualities of which for many still fell short of those of its erstwhile cousin, the vihuela. By 1694, when Guerau published *Poema harmónico*, the collection from which these works are taken, the vihuela had been resigned to musical history for a century or so. And yet the guitar, despite its acceptance by the French and English courts and its more sophisticated repertoire furnished by such player/composers as Francesco Corbetta and Gaspar Sanz, had yet fully to shake off its rustic connotations – which were, of course, also part of its attraction. As Javier Suárez-Pajares writes in his excellent booklet-note accompanying this set: 'In a way, Guerau's *Poema harmónico* is a mature creative response to [a] nostalgia for the vihuela and its times, for the noble instrument, and elevated music.'

Xavier Díaz-Latorre's interpretations likewise constitute a 'mature creative response' to Guerau's own music, which largely comprises sets of variations on *passacalles*, *jácaras*, *españoletas*, *pavanas* and suchlike, and features mainly plucked and often imitative writing, with strumming used either as an ornament or strongly implied in other cases. Díaz-Latorre dedicates these recordings to his former teacher and fellow Baroque guitarist Hopkinson Smith, and something of

Smith's highly refined approach can be heard here. Díaz-Latorre is however more willing to approach extremes – of passion, of introspection, of a modern musician's ironic layering of nostalgia. The result is a kind of intimate theatre that is completely beguiling.

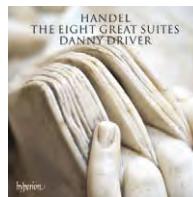
William Yeoman

Handel

Eight Great Suites, HWV426-433. Suites - HWV438; HWV444. Chaconne, HWV435

Danny Driver *pf*

Hyperion Ⓜ ② CDA68041/2 (142' • DDD)



John Cluer published Handel's *Suites de pièces pour le clavecin* in November 1720.

Hyperion's set by harpsichordist Paul Nicholson (6/95) is one of the finest recordings of Handel's 'Eight Great Suites' ever made, so it seems fair enough that now the label allows pianist Danny Driver a crack of the whip using a Steinway.

The scalic flourishes of the First Suite's Prelude instantly reveal Driver's nimble fingerwork, meticulous control over dynamic accentuation on key harmonic features and judicious use of the sustain pedal. The rippling D minor arpeggios of the Prelude to Suite No 3 transfer to the piano thrillingly; I'm not entirely sold on some dynamic exaggerations and smudginess in the same suite's enormous penultimate set of variations but the theatrical *Presto* finale is enunciated crisply. Driver's softly shaded Prelude to Suite No 6 in F sharp minor is a clear instance where the French overture style would function entirely differently on a harpsichord, and some listeners might miss the explosive dramatic tension of a double-manual harpsichord's sonorous plucked strings in the Ouverture and Chaconne that open and close Suite No 7 in G minor; if one was to try for that impact on a piano it would probably bury the music, so Driver's pragmatic



Mature, creative response: Xavier Díaz-Latorre and his guitar open up the 'strange, intricate musical world' of Francisco Guerau

solution of textural transparency is an effective alternative treatment of the material. However, the Italianate *Adagio* that opens Suite No 2 in F major seems naturally suited to a *legato* Steinway approach.

Most of Handel's French-style intricate dance movements are played with dignified tenderness: the consecutive allemandes and courantes always have a delicate balance between *cantabile* warmth in the elegant upper melody, softly precise inner details and a lightly flowing bass-line. The quick Fugue that launches Suite No 4 in E minor has a sparkling clarity that any eminent Baroque specialist keyboardist would be pleased with. If you want to hear these pieces played on a sleek grand piano using an engagingly post-historical approach, with flawlessly stylish ornamentation (eg the embellished vocalising line in the Sarabande from No 7) and a variety of dynamic nuances (the Chaconne in G major), then look no further.

David Vickers

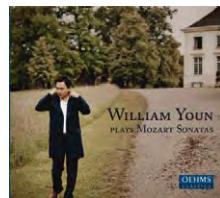
Mozart

Piano Sonatas - No 4, K282; No 8, K310;

No 10, K330; No 17, K570

William Youn *p*

Oehms  OC880 (77' • DDD)



William Youn is a young Korean pianist who plans to record the complete Mozart piano sonatas over a five-year period. And, placing all my cards on the table, I have to say I have rarely heard Mozart-playing more graceful, fine-toned and inward-looking. Seeking far beyond an 'Appollonian view of things' (Youn), his hypersensitivity to underlying drama, to the composer's most subtle emotional shifts, makes you more aware than ever of Mozart's genius.

His flawless dexterity allows him a poetic freedom to explore every facet of the music's character. How supremely he captures the vibrancy and unrest of the A minor Sonata, K310 (for him the opening left-hand chords are like 'a nervously hammering heartbeat'). Hear him in the haunting grace and solace with which he opens the central *Andante cantabile con espressivo*, a true oasis of calm after the first movement's agitation before the music is once more clouded with intensity. What whispering menace and desolation he finds in the windswept

finale, though with everything, however prophetic, achieved within a perfectly classical context. Again, in K330 and K570 I felt grateful for every repeat made, so that you can relive Mozart's quality. At about five minutes into the B flat Sonata, K570, you will hear one of many moments where Youn weaves a truly magical spell. Such a sense of Mozart's stature, the need for poise, transparency and an inclusive musicianship, is special indeed. Youn is finely recorded and I can scarcely wait to hear him in further Mozart, and perhaps most of all in the concertos. **Bryce Morrison**

Nyman

'All Imperfect Things'

Music from *The Piano*, *The Draughtsman's Contract*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *Enemy Zero* and *A Zed and Two Noughts*

Sally Whitwell *p*

ABC Classics  ABC481 0412 (51' • DDD)



Over the years, Michael Nyman's popular soundtrack to Jane Campion's film *The Piano* has become a victim of its own success. At one point during the 1990s

everybody seemed to be playing it, from aspiring young pianists to serious professionals. And with mixed results: very few performers managed to strike a balance between the music's heart-on-sleeve romanticism and the minimalist techniques that underpinned it.

Until now, that is. Sally Whitwell comes fairly close to perfection in 'All Imperfect Things'. On the surface we are presented with no-nonsense Nyman – 17 taut tracks played with crystal-clear articulation, rhythmic precision and dynamic thrust. In fact, a deeper understanding informs Whitwell's performances, which is communicated as much through the less familiar pieces than the so-called showstoppers. For example, Whitwell races through 'The Heart Asks Pleasure First' in order to show how effective 'Silver-Fingered Fling' can sound in the hands of an intelligent pianist. And in 'Goodbye Mortie' from *The Diary of Anne Frank* she uncovers something of a hidden gem from Nyman's back catalogue.

It's not just during the expressive moments that Whitwell shines. She pulls off a near-convincing performance of the tricky 'Chasing Sheep is Best Left to Shepherds', and in the opening of 'Time Lapse' makes each chord sound as if it were being dredged from the very depths of the instrument. The gloves are most definitely off here. The only let-down for Nyman fans will be the absence of a number of important pieces. One can understand why time constraints prevented Whitwell from including the Satie-inspired suite from *Wonderland*; but 'Big My Secret' from *The Piano* is a glaring omission, especially since its companion piece 'The Embrace' is included. Therein lies the disc's only imperfection. **Pwyll ap Siôn**

Roussel

'Piano Music, Vol 1'

Sonatine, Op 16. Le marchand de sable qui passe, Op 13. Trois Pièces, Op 49. Prélude et fugue, Op 46. Doute. Petit Canon perpétuel. L'accueil des Muses. Segovia, Op 29. Conte à la poupee

Jean-Pierre Armengaud pf

Naxos ® 8 573093 (64' • DDD)



Following five issues of Roussel's orchestral music, Naxos now gives us the first of a three-volume set of the piano music. This includes a premiere recording of the piano version of *Le marchand de sable qui passe*'s incidental music and a wealth of material

sufficiently varied and original to catch the ear of even the most alert listener. For Roussel scorned easy accessibility, and his mix of intricacy and astringency, his 'sombre and twisting harmony' (Gérald Hugon's excellent notes), his sweet and sour idiom can be bewildering.

Op 46 offers a case in point: the busy opening Prelude is followed by a typically offbeat Fugue, its progression seen, as it were, through a distorting mirror and with an ironically decisive major-key end. The tortuous climbing of *Doute* ('Doubt') is a reminder of late Fauré, though Roussel's sharpness is sufficiently idiosyncratic to make influences a matter of conjecture. Things lighten, however, in *Segovia*, a perky, affectionate all-Spanish tribute to the great guitarist, and *Conte à la poupee* is a gentle lullaby of much-needed charm.

Finally, Roussel was championed by two great French pianists, Robert Casadesus in the *Trois Pièces*, Op 49, and Alfred Cortot, who conducted the first performances of the early orchestral works, but even they could hardly have made a finer case for the composer than Jean-Pierre Armengaud, whose rich experience is reflected in well-recorded performances of outstanding vitality and expertise. **Bryce Morrison**

Schnittke

'Complete Piano Music'

Piano Sonatas - No 1; No 2; No 3. Variations.

Prelude and Fugue. Improvisation and Fugue.

Variations on a Chord. Little Piano Pieces.

Homage to Igor Stravinsky, Sergei Prokofiev and

Dmitri Shostakovich. Five Aphorisms. Sonatina

for Piano (Four Hands). Cadenzas to Mozart's

Piano Concertos K39, K467, K491 & K503

Simon Smith, abRichard Beauchamp,

^b**John Cameron** pfs

Delphian M ② DCD34131 (146' • DDD)



Alfred Schnittke may not have written the most idiomatic and finger-friendly piano music of his time. Yet he surely understood and internalised the instrument's capabilities and limitations, while at the same time showing little respect for even the best pianists' capabilities and limitations. It takes more than virtuoso equipment to navigate this composer's keyboard geography; one also needs Olympian stamina, an orchestrally orientated inner ear and the kind of projection and concentration one associates with the best stage actors. How else can one master Schnittke's three crazy piano sonatas, with their relentless opposition of

material, in-your-face dynamic extremes, cinematic transitions and unpredictable juxtapositions of baby-simple lines and textural avalanches? Or ensure sustaining power and momentum in the early, serial *Prelude & Fugue* and *Improvisation & Fugue*? Even simple children's fare like the unpublished *Sonatina* for piano duet or the eight *Little Piano Pieces* are spiced with deliberately weird chords and plot twists that should not catch an interpreter unawares, and ditto Schnittke's Mozart concerto cadenzas.

Fortunately Simon Smith has the technical wherewithal and serious musicianship that enable him to convey seemingly intractable passages with narrative cogency, such as the pulverising climax of clusters in the Second Sonata's *Allegro moderato*, or the *Variation on a Chord*'s machine-gun-like overlapping repeated notes in different registers. Note too his haunting *legato* in the First and Third Sonatas' *Lento* movements, although superior engineering underlines Igor Tchertuev's more translucent, shimmering touch in a now out-of-print Caro Mitis release that would otherwise be my first choice for the sonatas (4/09). That takes nothing away from Smith's formidable achievement in what appears to be the first complete recording of the composer's piano works. His thoroughly researched annotations add further value to an important release. **Jed Distler**

Schubert

Allegretto, D915. Auf dem Wasser zu singen,

D774 (arr Liszt, S558 No 2). Drei Klavierstücke,

D946. Kupelwieser-Walzer, DAnh14

(arr R Strauss). Zwölf Ländler, D790. Ländler,

D366 No 12. Litanei auf das Fest Allerseelen,

D343 (arr Liszt, S562 No 1). Der Müller und der

Bach, D795 No 19 (arr Liszt, S565 No 2)

Wandererfantasie, D760

Bertrand Chamayou pf

Erato E 2564 63707-8 (70' • DDD)



Bertrand Chamayou, on his first disc for Erato, offers a kind of Schubertiade of the mind – and it proves to be a most enticing 70 minutes. The large-scale (the *Wanderer* and the *Drei Klavierstücke*, D946) sit comfortably among the smaller-scale without a hint of incongruity or awkwardness as we move from virtuosity to sparseness and from seriousness to light-heartedness. And that has much to do with the pianist himself, who treats everything with equal respect and palpable ►

GRAMOPHONE Collector

BEETHOVEN PIANO SONATAS

Jed Distler listens to a selection of recent additions to the Beethoven piano discography from pianists you may not have encountered



Grabbing your attention: Paavali Jumppanen plays Beethoven with 'pinpoint control' and excitement, too

For all the CD industry's ups and downs, the Beethoven sonata business continues to boom, with new wares from emerging and established contenders. **Paavali Jumppanen** grabs your attention throughout the three Op 2 Sonatas with impressive lightness and point to the F minor's outer movements, the A major's *Allegro vivace* and the C major's unusually brisk *Scherzo*, although he cannot resist just a little hint of a swan dive in the A major Rondo's main theme. Op 101 stands out for the March movement and the concluding fugue's pinpoint control and finely honed balances. In this context, it's surprising to encounter a relatively expansive and rhetorical *Hammerklavier* first movement, replete with big *ritards* and the occasional added bass octave. Similar expressive gestures soften the surprising impact of the *Scherzo*'s momentary shift from B flat major to B minor, while the cumulative effect of the fugal finale's terse trajectory is shattered by Jumppanen's Mengelbergian protraction of the concluding chords.

I find 25-year-old **Alexej Gorlatch's** Oehms debut more compelling. He plays up the imposing dynamic contrasts in the *Pathétique* Sonata's first movement and obtains a rare combination of crisp clarity and sonorous heft in the difficult-to-sustain left-hand broken octaves. Although the *Adagio*'s pulse fluctuations sound more generic than purposeful and sometimes throw important rhythmic details off kilter,

the poised and well-articulated Rondo compensates. Gorlatch understates the *Moonlight's Adagio sostenuto*'s dynamics, unfolding the music at a brisk and flexible tempo that directly corresponds to his lilting, intelligently voiced *Allegretto*. The *Presto agitato* rushes out of the gate, only to grow slower and weightier as it progresses. Some listeners may perceive a studied and sectionalised quality to Gorlatch's seemingly pre-planned expressive devices and intricate shadings of nuance throughout the *Tempest* Sonata, yet why quibble over such distinctive, gorgeously reproduced pianism?

Sona Shaboyan programmes the *Tempest* alongside two obscure sonatas published by the Zurich-based Hans Georg Nägeli (1773–1836) that were all part of a series devoted to outstanding contemporary composers of that era. Her interpretation is less compulsively detailed than Gorlatch's, yet arguably more spontaneous and forward-moving; notice the urgency in the finale's cross-rhythmic accents, the pronounced *cantabile* in the central movement and stronger adherence to the composer's controversial long first-movement pedal markings. Von Wartensee's C major Sonata alludes to Weber-esque symmetrical glitter rather than Beethovenian combativeness. Although Anton Liste quotes the *Tempest* finale's main theme in the slow movement of his hour-long *Grande sonata*, the music relates more to Schubert's looser-knit style

in terms of its discursive melodic sidebars and startling harmonic detours. Shaboyan's integrity and musicality are never in doubt, though added bravura and assertion wouldn't hurt.

Inna Faliks's MSR Beethoven disc suffers from dry, closely miked and dynamically constricted engineering that gives no hint of the big and colourful sound this excellent pianist produces in concert. As a result, her authoritative and incisive interpretations of the *Eroica Variations* and the Op 111 Sonata must inevitably compete alongside musically comparable and sonically superior versions in the same price range and lower. Although I prefer a higher degree of improvisatory abandon in the G minor Fantasia, Op 77, and more rhythmic swagger in the C major Polonaise, Faliks's honest technique and meticulous filigree merit admiration and respect.

There's also much to admire and respect in **Vladimir Feltsman**'s *Diabelli Variations*. You'll notice the proper and consistent accentuation in Vars 7 and 9, plus Var 19's uncommon linear clarity, hammered home so forcefully that one forgets Feltsman's tempo is actually slower than Beethoven's *Presto*. By contrast, he spins out the lyrical Vars 18 and 24 with obvious affection and eloquence, and sustains the sombre mood of the *minore* variations beautifully. Still, problems persist. He irons out Var 1's dynamic contrasts, begins Var 10 at a genuinely lithe *presto* that soon slows down to a more heavily textured *molto allegro*, and, like Alfred Brendel, shifts into low gear for Var 22's parody of Mozart's 'Notti e giorno faticar'. The concluding *Andante favori* stands out for Feltsman's singing simplicity and expressive economy. When Feltsman is on form he's terrific, but this disc could have been better. **6**

THE RECORDINGS



Beethoven Pf Sons Opp 2, 101 & 106
Jumppanen
Ondine (F) ODE1248-2D



Beethoven Pf Sons Opp 13,
27 No 2 & 31 No 2 Gorlatch
Oehms (F) OC879



Beethoven. Liste. Wartensee Pf Sons
Shaboyan
Guild (M) (F) GMCD7405/6



Beethoven Pf Son Op 111, etc
Faliks
MSR Classics (F) MS1446



Beethoven Diabelli Vars, etc
Feltsman
Nimbus Alliance (F) NI6257

GRAMOPHONE Archive**Schubert's Wanderer**

Three recordings that came before Chamayou and Douglas, and how Gramophone rated them



MAY 1959

Schubert Fantasia in C major, D760, 'Wanderer'
Claudio Arrau pf
Columbia • 33CX1569 (12in • 30s)

This, as played by Arrau, is, if

I may be allowed the expression, a proper knockout. His performance is immensely powerful and at the same time lovingly lyrical, slightly fanatical and at the same time completely relaxed. I have never enjoyed the work so much. With some pianists it can sound full of sound and fury, signifying you know what; here it blazes with conviction. I hope Columbia will reissue this performance either on its own or coupled with something more attractive [than the *Drei Klavierstücke*, D946].

Roger Fiske



MAY 1960

Schubert Wanderer Fantasy, D760
Alfred Brendel pf
Vox • PL11610 (12in • 30s)

His keyboard technique is perfectly adequate to the diabolical demands of Schubert's Fantasy – less brilliant than that of Gary Graffman, less sensual than that of Adrian Aeschbacher. Brendel doesn't believe in fireworks where Schubert is concerned, and he sets deliberate tempi but isn't scared of varying the pace within a movement where the feeling of the music suggests it. His sense of rhythm and structure is so strong that when he does change gear the total shape is unimpaired.

William Mann



NOVEMBER 1963

Schubert Fantasia in C major, D760, 'Wanderer'
Sviatoslav Richter pf
HMV • ASD561 (12in • 32s 3d)

Richter pounds away at the outer movements with just the steely brilliance they need. This is tremendously athletic playing, overpowering in effect. I can't see the rival versions of the *Wanderer* deterring anyone from choosing the Richter. The Brendel has the same titanic approach, though not quite the same degree of virtuosity. This performance is really something very special, quite apart from the fact that he is much more realistically recorded than Brendel.

Roger Fiske

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affection. The *Wanderer* is a real test of any musician but Chamayou surmounts the work's sometimes unpianistic demands without ever leaving you, as some do, feeling as if you've been punched in the face. Instead, he revels in its virtuosity and in the sheer variety of texture, grasping its structure as well as Paul Lewis does. And the way he creates pools of stillness at the start of the C sharp minor section is magical. From this to pieces such as the *Zwölfländler* might seem a jolt but Chamayou is just as effective here, with an unselfconscious charm to his playing. If I marginally prefer Lewis in the third of the *Drei Klavierstücke*, it's a matter of taste, not quality, for both pianists fully inhabit the other-worldly quality of this extraordinary music.

Of the three Liszt song transcriptions here, 'Auf dem Wasser' is particularly winning, even if no one among modern-day pianists can quite match Voldodos in conveying the heartbreak of 'Der Müller und der Bach'. And the recital ends with a delightful rarity: a waltz that Schubert is supposed to have played at a friend's wedding in 1826 but never wrote down; it was passed down orally and finally written down by Richard Strauss (you can detect his hand in some *Rosenkavalier*-like harmonies). As a modern-day fantasy on a theme of a Schubertiade, this disc is to be warmly applauded. **Harriet Smith**

Der Müller und der Bach – selected comparison:

Voldodos (6/02) (SONY) SK89647

Drei Klavierstücke – selected comparison:

Lewis (2/12) (HARM) HMC90 2115/16

Wandererfantasie – selected comparison:

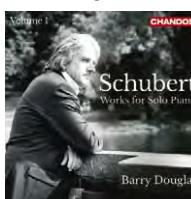
Lewis (12/12) (HARM) HMC90 2136/7

Schubert

Piano Sonata No 21, D960. *Wandererfantasie*, D760. *Du bist die Ruh*, D776 (arr Liszt, S558 No 3). *Ungeduld*, D795 (arr Liszt, S563 No 5)

Barry Douglas pf

Chandos • CHAN10807 (69' • DDD)



How do you interpret *Molto moderato* as a tempo in the first movement of D960?

Awkward question, which probably explains why basic speeds vary, 85 beats per minute from András Schiff down to 63 from Sviatoslav Richter. Barry Douglas settles for 79, volatile in outlook too. He repeats the exposition, too, but a touch more impetuously the second time round. It's another view, as it ought to be. Douglas yields to content as he feels it, the C sharp minor beginning of the development

ruminative, the build up to D minor vehemence. An emotive slow movement – C sharp minor once more – isn't treated as a mawkish swansong. *Andante sostenuto* is taken at face value, the A major middle section no lingering farewell, the finale carefully managed so as not to sound an anticlimax as it sometimes does.

Awkward too is *Allegro con fuoco ma non troppo* for the first movement of D760: 'not too fiery' or 'not too lively'? Douglas straddles both, neither the clarion onslaught of Richter nor the gentler approach of Schiff. Occasionally *forte* and *fortissimo* could be better differentiated; but tempo changes to reflect contrasts between heroics and yielding grace, for example in the second subject, are finely graded. A strong left hand grounds the harmony of the *Adagio*'s deep opening melody, passion rising as rhythms change and notes get smaller, the final *Allegro* controlled yet celebratory. Douglas stands alongside the most distinguished in both works, the smaller pieces accorded similar care. An excellent disc. **Nalen Anthoni**

Pf Son No 21 – selected comparisons:

Richter (1/94) (OLYM) OCD335

Schiff (6/95^R) (DECC) 475 1842DF2

Brendel (3/01) (PHIL) 456 573-2PH2

Lewis (5/03) (HARM) HMC90 1800

Cooper (7/10) (AVIE) AV2158

Wandererfantasie – selected comparisons:

Richter (11/63^R) (EMI) 631810-2, 623080-2 or 217411-2

Schiff (6/00) (ECM) 464 320-2

Leonskaja (WARN) 0927 40831-2

Pétur Sakari

Dupré Prelude and Fugue, Op 7 No 1

Duruflé Suite, Op 5 Messiaen Le banquet

céleste Tournemire Choral-Improvisation sur le 'Victimea paschali' Vierne Pièces de fantaisie - Claire de lune, Op 53 No 5; Toccata, Op 53 No 6; Impromptu, Op 54 No 2; Carillon de Westminster, Op 54 No 6

Pétur Sakari org

BIS (F) BIS1969 (74' • DDD/DSD)

Played on the Great Organ of Saint-Etienne-du-Mont, Paris



What gives distinction to this disc of 20th-century French organ music by the usual suspects is the recording location – the church of St-Etienne-du-Mont in Paris where, from 1930 until his death in 1986, Maurice Duruflé held sway (with a little help from his wife). Strange, then, that the booklet provides no information about the organ other than the usual stop-list, and while the connection is highlighted in the ►



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GRAMOPHONE RECORD OF THE MONTH:

MOZART: Requiem (Reconstruction of first performance);
Dunedin Consort / John Butt
Linn CKD 449 **Offer £11.99**

GRAMOPHONE EDITOR'S CHOICES:

"Arise, my Muse" Music of the Restoration; *Iestyn Davies / Richard Egarr etc*
Wigmore Hall Live WHLIVE 0065 **Offer £8.99**

BIRTWISTLE: The Moth Requiem; *Roderick Williams / BBC Singers / Nash Ensemble / Nicholas Kok*
Signum SIGCD 368 **Offer £12.99**

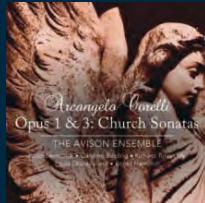
HANDEL: Peace & Celebration (Coronation Anthems etc); *European Union Baroque Orchestra / Choir Of Clare College, Cambridge / Lars Ulrik Mortensen Obsidian CD 711* **Offer £12.99**

"Marie et Marion" Motets & Chansons from 13th C. France; *Anonymous 4*
Harmonia Mundi HMU80 7524 **Offer £13.99**

OUR PICK OF THE MONTH'S RELEASES - A full list of May offers is available on request



BRAHMS: German Requiem
Sally Matthews; Christopher Maltman; London Symphony Orchestra; Valery Gergiev
LSO Live LSO0748 **Offer £7.99**



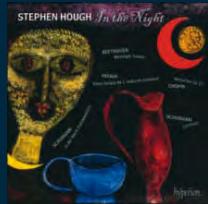
CORELLI: Church Sonatas Opp. 1 & 3
The Avison Ensemble; Pavlo Beznosiuk
Linn CKD414 (2CDs) **Offer £14.99**



ELGAR: Symphony No. 2
Staatskapelle Berlin; Daniel Barenboim
Decca 4786677 **Offer £12.99**



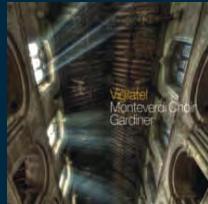
HAYDN: Die Jahreszeiten (The Seasons)
Collegium Vocale Gent; Philippe Herreweghe
PHI LPH013 (2CDs) **Offer £19.99**



"In the Night"
 Piano music by Schumann, Beethoven, Chopin and Hough
Stephen Hough
Hyperion CDA67996 **Offer £12.99**



SCHUBERT: The Late Piano Sonatas D784, D958, D959 & D960
Paul Lewis
Harmonia Mundi HMC90 2165/66 (2CDs) **Offer £13.99**



"Vigilate!"
 English Renaissance Polyphony
Monteverdi Choir; John Eliot Gardiner
Soli Deo Gloria SDG720 **Offer £12.99**



WALTON: Symphony No. 1, Violin Concerto
Tasmin Little; BBC Symphony Orchestra; Edward Gardner
Chandos CHSA5136 **Offer £12.99**



BEETHOVEN: Symphony No. 3 'Eroica' (+ Brahms, Schoenberg)
Lucerne Festival Orchestra; Claudio Abbado
Accentus Music DVD ACC20282 **Offer £18.99**
Blu-ray ACC10282 **Offer £27.99**



DONIZETTI: Don Pasquale
Alessandro Corbelli; Danielle de Niese etc; Glyndebourne Festival; Enrique Mazzola (recorded live at the Royal Opera House, 2013)
Opus Arte DVD OA1134D **Offer £22.99**
Blu-ray OABD7144D **Offer £27.99**



RICHARD STRAUSS: Capriccio
Renée Fleming; Bo Skovhus etc; Wiener Staatsoper; Christoph Eschenbach
C Major DVD 715908 **Offer £31.99**
Blu-ray 716004 **Offer £27.99**



SHAKESPEARE: Richard II (Recorded live at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Nov. 2013)
David Tennant; Oliver Ford Davies; Michael Pennington etc; Opus Arte DVD OA1142D **Offer £18.99**
Blu-ray OABD7149 **Offer £22.99**



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“A revelatory CD”

Observer, October 2013

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Classical Source, 2013

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THE ROMANTIC ORGAN

Malcolm Riley introduces the six most interesting discs from a huge crop of new releases featuring the King of Instruments



Harry Goss-Custard, sometime organist at Liverpool Cathedral, plays the Britannic Organ

Among the many organ discs released recently, several players have embarked upon projects exploring the monumentally vast output of Max Reger. Vol 2 of **Jean-Baptiste Dupont's** complete works for Hortus has been recorded with the support of the Max Reger Institute. The recently rebuilt 1912 Stahlhuth organ in St Martin's Church, Dudelange in Luxembourg, is an ideal vehicle, with its 82 stops offering the widest and richest timbral palette any organist could wish for. The opening of the 'Benedictus' from the Op 59 pieces is but an exquisite whisper. The other pieces in this set are all played with assurance and care, especially the florid Toccata, which Dupont controls most persuasively with his *crescendo* pedal. The clean-cut Fantasia and Fugue in C minor (dedicated to Richard Strauss) provides a good workout for the organ's bellows.

Vol 13 of Naxos's Reger Complete Organ Works series starts with another fine performance of the Fantasia and Fugue in C minor. **Christian Barthén** attacks it with a greater dramatic thrust (and more thundery registrations) than Dupont, taking the Fugue at a considerably brisker pace. The 1911 Steinmeyer in Mannheim's Christuskirche is another perfect choice for the Lisztian First Sonata. The half-dozen *Monologues* (from Op 63) reveal Reger's poetic side, in contrast to his customary contrapuntal extravagance.

The gem here is the *Ave Maria* – an exquisite interlude in an otherwise rich meal of late and grandiose Romanticism.

Bernhard Buttmann's sumptuously appointed four-disc box-set is the first release in Oehms Classics' complete Reger cycle. Recorded during 2012 on five instruments, Buttmann sails through this immensely challenging music with complete technical ease. Listening to many of the longer works is akin to eating a mixed kebab: sometimes the going is quite easy before you suddenly come across something spectacularly chewy – gristly even. With large-scale Reger, a good deal of persistent repeated listening is required to obtain the full benefit. Buttmann, however, is a persuasive advocate.

Karg-Elert's output was nearly as extensive as that of his Bavarian contemporary. **Stefan Engels** visited the church of St Georg in Ulm for Vol 10 in Priory's Complete Organ Works. The 45-stop Walcker organ is of 1904 vintage, a perfect match for this highly colourful programme, which consists of the third and fourth volumes of Karg-Elert's seminal *Chorale-Improvisations*, Op 65. Guilmant, Widor and Bossi enthused about this substantial body of music when it first appeared in 1909 and it continues to provide a useful resource to today's organists. Engels squeezes every possible touch of expression from each piece, the longest of which is just under six minutes.

The title of **Tobias Frank's** Ely Cathedral recital for the Rondeau label – 'English Romantics and Transcriptions' – is a little misleading since nearly a third of the disc is given over to transcriptions of overtures by Mendelssohn and Humperdinck. However, they fit so perfectly on the Harrison and Harrison instrument that all is forgiven. Frank makes a satisfying meal, too, of Howells's Third Rhapsody and Lemare's rarely heard *Concert Fantasia*, Op 91. Pride of place are Whitlock's evergreen *Four Extemporisations*, pen portraits of three friends and an act of homage to Delius. The only quibble is that the softest piece of the set, 'Fidelis', is taken far too slowly, sounding more like a sight-reading exercise than the Anglican preamble par excellence that it is.

By way of a novelty, Oehms Classics has released the sixth volume of its **Britannic Organ** series, in which rare historic Welte rolls are played back on the mechanical organ that had been destined to be installed in the *Titanic*'s sister ship, the *Britannic*. Here is a chance to hear Alfred Hollins, Harry Goss-Custard, William Wolstenholme and Herbert Walton – all organ virtuosos of their day – in superb digital sound. Some of their registrations will make the listener sit up, for example Karg-Elert's *Clair de lune* with glockenspiel attachment, and there are some decidedly wayward changes of tempo in Wesley's *Choral Song and Fugue*. But, overall, this lavish production, superbly illustrated and documented, is definitely worth obtaining. Ⓛ

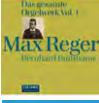
THE RECORDINGS



Reger Complete Organ Works, Vol 2
Jean-Baptiste Dupont
Editions Hortus (M) HORTO86/7



Reger Complete Organ Works, Vol 13
Christian Barthén
Naxos (S) 8 572906



Reger Organ Works
Bernhard Buttmann
Oehms (P) OC851



Karg-Elert Complete Organ Works,
Vol 10 **Stefan Engels**
Priory (P) PRCD1074



Various Cpsrs 'English Romantics and Transcriptions' **Tobias Frank**
Rondeau (P) ROP6078



Various Cpsrs 'The Britannic Organ,
Vol 6' **Various artists**
Oehms (P) OC845

note about the Suite, this goes on to claim that Duruflé 'composed a vast amount of music for the instrument'. There are only 14 opus numbers to his credit – just six of which are for organ – plus two or three surviving unpublished works, along with the transcriptions he made of Tournemire's recorded improvisations (one of which appears on the disc).

For the past three years Pétur Sakari has been studying with Vincent Warnier and Thierry Escaich in Paris. If that has given him a special insight into the interpretation of French organ music, it does not reveal itself here. The overriding impression is of a conscientious and technically solid player for whom textural accuracy largely overrides interpretative input. These are secure performances but only in the Duruflé Suite is there the hint of deeper involvement. Apart from the instrument itself and BIS's superb recording, there is little to entice one away from the numerous other – and often more stimulating – discs of this repertoire currently available.

Marc Rochester

‘Harmonies du soir’

Brahms Three Pieces, Op 117 Granados Escenas románticas - El poeta y el ruiseñor; Epílogo. Goyescas - La maja y el ruiseñor Liszt Consolations, S172 - No 3; No 4. Harmonies du soir, S139 No 11. Vallée d’Obermann, S160 No 6

Tonya Lemoh pf

Danacord © DACOCD743 (57' • DDD)



This intriguingly varied recital takes its title from ‘Harmonies du soir’, grandest and most expansive of Liszt’s 12 *Transcendental Etudes*. And it is both here and in the vast spans of ‘Vallée d’Obermann’ (from the Swiss book of the *Années de pèlerinages*) that Tonya Lemoh (Australian-born but now based in Denmark) makes her truest mark, showing an empathy that eludes her in her many more intimate offerings. She is bold and assertive in ‘Vallée d’Obermann’ rather than lost in gloomy contemplation. Anxious to keep everything on the move, she modifies Liszt’s *lento* direction, banishing all sense of Byronic longueurs. How she revels, too, in the central Alpine storm, making thunder and lightning flash across the keyboard.

In Granados’s ‘The Maiden and the Nightingale’ and in two of the magical *Escenas románticas*, she is also rewarding. But in Brahms’s Op 117 Intermezzos she is too generalised, too lacking in colour and inflection to suggest their crepuscular

magic. Bypassing terms such as *piano* and *dolce* or *sotto voce*, she fails to read between the lines and one only has to turn to Radu Lupu (admittedly a cruel comparison) for a radically different poetic experience. In Liszt’s *Consolations* Nos 3 and 4 I wished for something altogether more rapt and inward. Danacord’s sound is exemplary.

Bryce Morrison

Brabms – selected comparisons:

Lupu (5/71^R, 8/87, 3/06) (DECC)

417 599-2DH or 475 7070DC3

‘Southwell Splendour 2’

H Andriessen Choral IV Archer A Festival

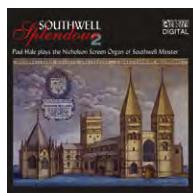
Toccata Buxtehude Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern, BuxWV223^a Dandrieu Variations on ‘O filii et filiae^a Dubois Douze Pièces nouvelles - Marche triomphale; Offertoire; In Paradisum; Fiat lux^a Karg-Elert Harmonies du soir^a Rathbone A Southwell Suite

Paul Hale org

OxRecs © OXCD120 (67' • DDD)

^aFrom OXCD80 (11/99)

Played on the Nicholson organ of Southwell Minster



In 1998 OxRecs released a critically acclaimed disc of music released to celebrate the installation of the new Nicholson organ on the Screen of Southwell Minster, a few miles west of Newark. On that occasion the playing honours were shared between the Minster’s Rector Chori and organist, Paul Hale, and his then assistant, Philip Rushworth.

This second volume includes some of those 1998 tracks, in music by Buxtehude, Dandrieu, Karg-Elert and Dubois. Such is the versatility of this instrument that it can tackle a wide range of repertory with ease. Since it speaks eastwards into the Choir, the reverberation length is a little drier than some listeners might expect in such a large building. Nevertheless, there are many organic thrills to be had, with old favourites juxtaposed with strong and fresh new music.

Archer’s attractive *Festival Toccata* dates from 2011 and owes a good deal to French models, while still retaining more than a hint of the Lancastrian Fells in its striding, undulating theme. Equally welcome is Rathbone’s *Southwell Suite*, which is almost entirely inspired by H Irons’s hymn tune, *Southwell*. This plain little melody undergoes an exhaustively (though entertainingly) wide range of treatments and transformations, before rounding the disc off with another rousing Toccata.

The most substantial single movement on the programme is the fourth *Choral* composed in 1921 by Hendrik Andriessen. Firmly in the Franckian tradition (albeit with a heavy dose of the neo-Baroque), this is a fine showcase for a magnificently symphonic instrument, played with consummately polished artistry by its designer. **Malcolm Riley**

‘Tears’

‘Harpsichord Laments of the 17th Century’

Byrd Lachrymae Pavan L Couperin Suite in F

Froberger Fantasia VI, FbWV206. Partita VI,

FbWV612 Schildt Paduana lagrima Tomkins

A Sad Pavan for These Distracted Times

Ewald Demeyere hpd/virg

Challenge Classics © CC72617

(58' • DDD/DSD)



Ah! Melancholia, aka ‘black bile’, yet socially fashionable in late-16th- and early-17th-century England. And wonder not why John Dowland isn’t included here. He is – in the guise of transcriptions or variations on his original *Lachrymae Pavan* by William Byrd and Melchior Schildt. Ewald Demeyere’s performance of Byrd is an absorbing mixture of regular and irregular stresses, of notes equally and unequally played. In comparison, and as reflected through Demeyere’s imagination, Schildt’s plainer outlines suggest a more formal expression of grief. Rather different in complexion is Tomkins’s *Sad Pavan*. This pupil of Byrd had non-conformist ideas on metre. So no time signature, and bar-lines are asymmetrical. Presumably he wanted an elastic rhythm – and gets it in a singular ‘sound-painting’ of personal distress.

From tears shed to tears perhaps unshed in the stoical rectitude of Froberger’s Fantasia, mainly semibreves, minims and crotchets moving slowly, Demeyere wise in keeping them bare of ornamentation. Or smiles breaking through tears in the Partita where, from the first movement onwards, light and shadow flit through major and minor keys. Maybe so too in Louis Couperin’s Suite from pieces compiled by Demeyere, a largely bright *Tombeau de M de Blancrocher* included.

The Pavans are played on virginals, the rest on harpsichord. The right decision, but Demeyere hits a bad snag in a closely miked recording that masks the differences in timbre between the instruments. Nevertheless, this is a fascinatingly fine programme, eruditely chosen and fervently portrayed. **Nalen Anthoni**

GRAMOPHONE Reissues

ASHKENAZY'S RACHMANINOV

Jed Distler reviews an 11-CD set of all of Rachmaninov's music for piano, played by one of his most loyal champions, Vladimir Ashkenazy



Finished business: Ashkenazy offers mindful musicianship and heartfelt affinity in 'complete' Rachmaninov

This box-set contains all of Vladimir Ashkenazy's solo and piano ensemble Rachmaninov recordings for Decca, along with the works for piano and orchestra in his mid-1980s cycle, conducted by Bernard Haitink. According to the booklet-notes, Ashkenazy welcomed the opportunity to remake the *concertante* works, not just to take advantage of the then-new digital technology but also to possibly improve upon his previous efforts. As it happens, the earlier *Paganini Rhapsody* with André Previn and the London Symphony Orchestra boasts more vivid orchestral detail in contrast to the Philharmonia Orchestra's more generalised support under Haitink's watch, while the Previn-conducted First, Second and Fourth offer more incisive outer movements: compare the fugetta in the Second Concerto's finale, for example. However, the Third Concerto with Haitink proves to be the most shapely and integrated of Ashkenazy's four studio versions, and features his strongest reading of the thicker first-movement cadenza option and his smoothest dispatch of the Intermezzo movement's waltz episode.

Elsewhere, no qualifications are necessary when discussing Ashkenazy's remarkable pianism, mindful musicianship and heartfelt affinity for this composer's keyboard idiom. In the Preludes, the expressive economy of Ashkenazy's *rubato* allows the music's orchestral polytextures plenty of time to breathe without undue lingering, whether in lyrical selections or the big-boned C major, E minor, G minor and B flat major pieces. The Op 23 E flat minor Prelude's double notes shimmer and scintillate, as do the rapid runs, galumphing leaps and big chordal climaxes in the *Etudes-tableaux* and the Second Sonata (played in its original 1913 version).

Compared with Ashkenazy's youthful, lyrically oriented EMI *Corelli Variations* recording (now on Testament), his two Decca remakes proved progressively refined and texturally varied, with more pronounced contrasts in character and mood. Although Ashkenazy has retreated from live solo performances on account of arthrosis in his hands, four discs' worth of material from recent sessions betray remarkably few compromises. Listen to the effortless swirling patterns in the E minor and E flat minor *Moments*

musicaux or the scurrying passagework of 'Polichinelle' (*Morceaux de fantaisie*), or the B flat minor Serenade's sharp left-hand thrusts and aristocratic line-spinning that evoke the composer's old shellac recording. The labyrinthine thickets Rachmaninov sets up throughout his transcriptions thoroughly capture Ashkenazy's imagination. He takes the deliciously upholstered Bach E major Violin Partita Prelude for a vivacious and dynamically contoured spin, while relishing the inner voices of the garishly reharmonised Schubert 'Wohin?'. Rachmaninov's keyboard prowess again comes to mind while listening to Ashkenazy navigate the madcap Kreisler *Liebesfreud* transcription with similar lightness, angularity and discreet pedalling. Likewise, the *Scherzo* from Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* takes feathery wing at a brisk tempo, yet with firm rhythmic grounding.

The Op 3 *Morceaux de fantaisie* includes the famous C sharp minor Prelude, re-recorded within its original context, and it's interesting to hear the older Ashkenazy play it markedly faster and with more intensity in the middle section in comparison to his younger self. But the relaxed repartee characterising the two-piano *Fantaisie-tableau* (Suite No 1) featuring his son Vovka yields to the generally brighter tempi and more firmly etched lines distinguishing the older recording with Previn. As for the ambitious and large-scale early *Chopin Variations* and First Sonata, I can only echo Jeremy Nicholas's highly complimentary original review (3/12) citing the 74-year-old pianist's return to top form. Building his sonority from the bottom up, Ashkenazy binds the Sonata's discursive paragraphs together with a sweeping momentum and symphonic continuity that rivet your attention. Some listeners, however, might prefer the late Alexis Weissenberg's edgier, more subjective DG recording, where his astringent tone and forceful projection drastically reduce the massive piano-writing's calorie count. In short, Decca's modest asking price (in the region of £36/\$80) is worth the solo and piano ensemble works alone, but stick with Hough/Litton (Hyperion, A/04) or Kocsis/de Waart (Philips, 7/96) for the concertos. ☺



THE RECORDING

Rachmaninov Complete Works for Piano **Ashkenazy**
Decca S 11 478 6348DC11

James MacMillan

He's fiercely Scottish and truly catholic in every sense. Marc Rochester meets the composer at a historic time for his country

This is going to be Scotland's year in the limelight. September sees the historic referendum to determine whether or not, after 307 years of union, Scotland breaks away from the United Kingdom to become a fully independent state. Meanwhile, the eyes of the sporting world will focus on Glasgow in July when the city hosts the 20th Commonwealth Games. Receiving rather less coverage in the global media, but nonetheless significant in its own small way, a brand new Scottish music festival, the Cumnock Tryst, launches in October and welcomes significant artists who will be attracted not so much by the architectural gems or gentle climate of this small Ayrshire town, as by the festival's artistic director, James MacMillan, the doyen of the current breed of Scottish composers, for whom 2014 is also something of a landmark: he turns 55 this year.

Having passed the half-century mark, MacMillan can be excused his periodic splenetic outbursts as he fends off what he sees as attacks on his native land, his profound Roman Catholic faith and, of course, music in his *Daily Telegraph*

'MacMillan's utter conviction in his firmly held beliefs only serves to ignite a creative spark in his composition'

blog (one outburst against the perceived anti-Englishness of the Scottish National Party prompted a reader to describe MacMillan as 'the self righteous, self appointed spokesman for extreme Catholicism in Scotland'). But if he looks to be moving into the ranks of Grumpy Old Men, MacMillan's utter conviction in his firmly held beliefs only serves to ignite a creative spark in his composition which blazes today with as much energy and self-confidence as it did back in 1990, when he first established himself as a force to be reckoned with on the British music scene with the premiere of *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie* at that year's Proms.

MacMillan's own commentary on this work reveals his abiding interest in the church's often stormy progress through Scottish history, as well as his desire to tell epic tales through music (it is also evidence of his long-held hatred of both social injustice and religious bigotry): 'Between 1560 and 1707 as many as 4500 Scots perished because their contemporaries thought they were witches. The persecution of witches was a phenomenon known to Catholic and Protestant Europe at this time, but the Reformation in Scotland gave an impetus to the attack on "witches" which became a popular and powerful crusade.' Musically, this dark episode in Scotland's religious



past inspired something both extraordinarily vivid and deeply moving, which clearly resonated with a non-Scottish audience in 1990 and continues to do so to this day; as the critic for the *Daily Telegraph* put it, 'MacMillan brilliantly demonstrated in *Isobel Gowdie* that accessibility need not necessarily involve compromise...all its various musical elements – be they Scottish folksong, Gregorian chant or pure MacMillan – are by no means merely illustrative but emanate from a powerful, all-embracing and unifying emotional impulse.'

Those 'various musical elements' are certainly diverse, and reveal MacMillan to be a true catholic in the full sense of the word – as meaning inclusive and all-embracing. So confident is he in his own stylistic voice that, while elements which would seem violently contradictory rub up against each other with almost disarming directness, his music comes across not just as coherent but also as immediately accessible. That stylistic self-confidence has not come with age, but was there from the very start. *The Scotsman*, reviewing the première this January of *Symphonic Study*, a work written back in 1981 but which (in his own words) the composer 'kind of forgot about', suggested the young MacMillan had borrowed 'mercilessly from Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*'. (The review added, however, that the work also revealed 'the mystical harmonic shrouds that, even today, weave a spectral miasma around MacMillan's centrally binding melodic threads'.) MacMillan himself acknowledges influences in his music from a great many 20th-century composers, singling out those who 'have been shaped by religious quests in



MacMillan, a devout Catholic, in a Scottish church – a home from home

antiquity, I have learnt much from the great contrapuntists – from Palestrina and Victoria to Bach. They inspire modern composers on the need to explore complexity in whatever music is being created.'

Clearly, a deep-seated Catholic faith is at the very core of MacMillan's writing, with his sacred music including a congregational setting of the Mass (*Mass of Blessed John Henry Newman*) composed in 2010 for the visit of Pope Benedict to Britain. However, in 2013 MacMillan declared: 'I have decided to stop writing congregational music for the Catholic Church...there is too much music being created, at the same time as the vast repository of tradition is ignored and wilfully forgotten.' It remains to be seen how true he will be to his word but he admits that his secular music 'can on many occasions be inspired by some reflection on theology or another aspect of religion. This is inevitable, I suppose, for a believer and a Catholic. For example, I have now composed two Passion settings – a St John and a St Luke. There are also many purely instrumental works which hover around similar territory, including my piano trio *Fourteen Little Pictures* [1997] (based on the Stations of the Cross) and the triptych of orchestral works *Triduum* [completed 1997] (based on the three days before the Resurrection).'

However, the most constant musical influence in his writing is drawn from his Scottish heritage: 'Along with a number of Scottish composers such as Judith Weir, Edward McGuire and others, I developed a keen interest in Scottish traditional music. Some of us have absorbed this experience

MACMILLAN FACTS

Born Kilwinning, Ayrshire, Scotland, July 16, 1959

Education University of Edinburgh and University of Durham

Teachers Kenneth Leighton and John Casken ('I was drawn to Leighton's choral music and to Casken's beautiful sense of orchestral colouring')

Self-confessed stylistic territory

'Somewhere between Shostakovich and Messiaen. The former for his determination to keep the symphony alive in modernity, and the latter for his theological explorations in sound'

Breakthrough work

The Confession of Isobel Gowdie (BBC commission, first performed at the Proms in 1990)

Most performed work

Veni, veni, Emmanuel
(more than 400 performances)

our time – Stravinsky, Schoenberg, Messiaen, Schnittke, Gubaidulina, Harvey, Tavener, Pärt, Górecki'. But he also recognises influences from much further back: 'From

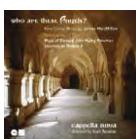
into our own music – in different ways. Sometimes it's conscious, sometimes subconscious. With me, I think it is there in a certain modality that appears from time to time, and a degree of ornamentation that can be traced back to bagpipe music such as pibroch and other sources. All this has been drawn in to a wider mix, so it is not always immediately observed in all my pieces, but it is certainly there as a subliminal ingredient. It has cropped up a lot in my most recent choral music.'

Beyond choral music, MacMillan's latest works give a vivid demonstration of the extraordinary range of this amazingly versatile composer. January saw the premiere (in London) of the Viola Concerto, the latest in a series of concertos conceived along traditional lines which so far have included works for piano, violin and oboe. In June last year the solo organ piece *St Andrews' Suite*, composed for the celebrations for the 600th anniversary of the founding of the University of St Andrews, was premiered at the university's ancient St Salvator's Chapel, scene of some of Scotland's more extreme religious conflicts. July saw the premiere in Stuttgart of an orchestral poem, *The Death of Oscar*, inspired by a monumental Scottish sculpture by Alexander Stoddart; and in February 2013 his sixth opera, *Clemency*, based on the Old Testament tale of Abraham and Sarah, was staged in the US after its successful premiere at the Royal Opera House in 2011. And this year, MacMillan is also personally promoting musical Scotland abroad when he directs the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra on tour in India.

When the referendum votes have been counted and the sporting medals have all been given out, MacMillan seems set to keep at least one aspect of Scottish life at the forefront of international consciousness. **G**

RECOMMENDED RECORDINGS

The many faces of MacMillan – a very Scottish composer



'Who are these angels?'

Cappella Nova / Alan Tavener; Canty / William Taylor hp
John Kitchen org Edinburgh Quartet
Linn F CKD383 (3/12)

MacMillan the choral master: here is some of his recent sacred choral music, including his *Mass of Blessed John Henry Newman* and several of the *Strathclyde Motets*.



Veni, veni, Emmanuel

Colin Currie perc Netherlands Radio Chamber
Philharmonic Orchestra / James MacMillan
Challenge Classics F CC72540 (A/12)

MacMillan the 'thriller': the composer himself describes this recording of his most popular work as 'a great thrill'. It also features a Scottish musician with whom he has developed a particularly close creative partnership.



The Confession of Isobel Gowdie. Symphony No 3, 'Silence'

BBC Philharmonic Orchestra / James MacMillan
Chandos M CHAN10275 (5/05)

MacMillan the vivid orchestrator: this is a dramatic and colourful recording of the music that brought MacMillan to international attention, alongside his most recent symphony (2002) – intriguingly subtitled *Silence*.

Vocal



Richard Wigmore reviews the latest Schubert from Goerne: 'Not once on these discs will you hear a melody distorted by bumps, bulges or unscripted accents' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 79**



Geoffrey Norris listens to the complete songs of Rachmaninov: 'Practically everything rings true, sung gloriously with palpable heart and soul'

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 87**

Biber · Kerll

Biber Vespro della Beata Vergine. Fidicinium sacro-profanum - Sonata No 3 **Kerll Missa in fletu solatium obsidionis Viennensis. Delectus, Op 1 - No 5, Ave regina; No 7, Exulta corda devota; No 26, Salve regina**
Cantus Cölln; Concerto Palatino / Konrad Junghänel
Accent (E) ACC24286 (73' • DDD)

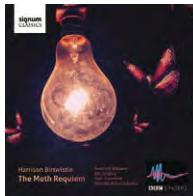


Johann Caspar Kerll studied with Carissimi in Rome and worked his way up through the ranks at the Munich court. He was ennobled by Emperor Leopold I in 1664 and it is supposed that he became the organist at the Stephansdom in Vienna. His *Missa in fletu solatium obsidionis Viennensis* (published 1689) was composed to commemorate the harrowing siege of Vienna by the Turks in 1683; Peter Wollny's essay observes that 'its gloomily imploring tone allows us to sense but little of the relief over the happy outcome of the siege'. This is borne out by the subdued *Gloria* setting in Cantus Cölln and Concerto Palatino's expertly balanced performance: the solemnly expressive 'et in terra pax hominibus' makes it seem as if peace on earth to all men has come at a steep price. Kerll's dignified and sincerely supplicatory *Agnus Dei* becomes increasingly anguished when it reiterates 'Dona nobis pacem'.

The headline attraction is Biber's *Vespers*, just one of three cycles contained in a large publication of music for the court of the Prince Archbishop of Salzburg, although the programme is fleshed out using four relatively intimate motets from Kerll's *Delectus sacrarum cantionum* (Munich, 1669). Cantus Cölln's performances ebb and flow masterfully through Biber's declamatory and astonishingly concise psalm settings, such as the rapid 'Nisi Dominus', constructed cleverly over a perpetually moving descending basso continuo line. **David Vickers**

Birtwistle

The Moth Requiem. The Ring Dance of the Nazarene^a. Three Latin Motets. Carmen Paschale. Lullaby. On the Sheer Threshold of the Night
Roderick Williams bar BBC Singers; Nash Ensemble / Nicholas Kok
Signum (E) SIGCD368 (74' • DDD • T/t)



I doubt whether anything the year brings for Birtwistle's 80th birthday is going to dim the lustre of this excellent recording of his choral music. Nor surpass it in importance, perhaps – it seems to me we may have failed to realise how close these pieces are to the core of him, in no way apart from the thrust of what he does on other stages, orchestral and instrumental, lyrical and theatrical. The more you explore the collection, the more aware you are of his fingerprints and the concerns we have come to think of as characteristic – to do with memory and memorialising, with transience and loss, call and response, myth and ritual, and with retellings of old stories in striking new ways. And as with other prime movers and shakers, he is his own man, whose sound and voice we immediately catch, recognisable from any two notes he puts together.

There are instruments here as well as voices – woodwind, harps and percussion rather than bowed strings, and sometimes only one, as in *Carmen Paschale*, the earliest of these pieces, from 1965. There it is a flautist who electrifies the setting of an Easter poem (from Helen Waddell's *Medieval Latin Lyrics*) at the mention of a nightingale. In *The Ring Dance of the Nazarene* (2003) there are woodwinds as well as a baritone soloist with the choir, together with a big part for a drummer on the Iranian darabuka, performing a kind of percussion continuo and symbolising perhaps 'the Nazarene' (= Christ) as dancer. He is given a dramatic entry. David Harsent, several times Birtwistle's librettist

and one of his preferred collaborators, did the text specially for the piece.

Long ago the church decreed against the role of dance in worship, and indeed there's nothing on the CD that the Christian liturgy could find room for, with the exception of the short *Lullaby* composed for the trebles of Southwark Cathedral. And yet – as John Fallas points out in the booklet-note – in Birtwistle's inspired craftings and treatments we are rarely far from the themes of Western sacred music: Christ's life, death and, for believers, his continuing life in us, together with the genres that are part of our memory: hymns, motets, a requiem of sorts.

This one, *The Moth Requiem*, the most recent of the six works (2012), revisits the theme of loss and is at once a meditation on loss and a memorialising of what is lost. Moths? Well, yes: the poem by Robin Blaser which prompted it was itself brought into being by his efforts to trace mysterious sounds heard in his house at night; their source was discovered to be a moth caught inside the lid of his piano. Do not expect any reminiscence of a traditional Requiem Mass but rather, through the incantation of the Latin names of moth species, some believed to be nearly extinct, a commemoration of departed loved ones. It is an extraordinary leap of imagination to reach the achievement here from that starting point. But no one could fail to catch the quality of the composition as one of the most personal of Birtwistle's recent scores. Terrific stuff, with already the feel of a classic, and admirably served by the BBC Singers plus alto flute and three harps, and the conductor Nicholas Kok. May I ask for the departed John Alldis and his choir to be remembered? I expect he's already in here somewhere. Without the work he did and the standards he set in the 1960s there would be no BBC Singers as we celebrate them today. **Stephen Plaistow**

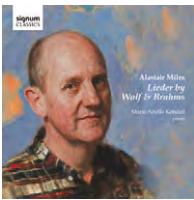
Brahms · Wolf

Brahms Vier ernste Gesänge, Op 121. Fünf Lieder, Op 105 - No 4, Auf dem Kirchhofe; No 5, Verrat. Feldeinsamkeit, Op 86 No 2. Nicht



European celebration: Lars Ulrik Mortensen conducts his young forces in their live recording at St John's Smith Square, September 2013 (review on page 74)

mehr zu dir zu gehen, Op 32 No 2. O wüsst
ich doch den Weg zurück, Op 63 No 8
Wolf Drei Gedichte von Michelangelo.
Goethe-Lieder - No 10, Der Sänger; No 49,
Prometheus; No 51, Grenzen der Menschheit
Alastair Miles bass **Marie-Noëlle Kendall** pf
Signum © SIGCD369 (66' • DDD • T/t)



Alastair Miles's gravely sonorous bass is finely attuned to Brahms's and Wolf's vocal

swansongs, linked by their themes of human futility and mortality – though the Brahms-loathing Wolf would have recoiled from the comparison. In Brahms's *Vier ernste Gesänge*, Miles distils something of the mournful stoicism of Hans Hotter. Other singers, notably Fischer-Dieskau, Thomas Quasthoff and Christian Gerhaher, have brought more human anguish and consolatory tenderness to these profound meditations. But Miles's oaken depth of tone and amplitude of line are impressive, and ultimately moving.

Occasional worries over pitch become slightly more nagging in the doleful, drooping chromaticisms of Wolf's Michelangelo songs. In the bleak memento

mori of 'Alles endet, was entsteht', especially, Miles's soft singing can lose focus and intensity. That said, he sings with feeling and understanding, if without the specific insights of Fischer-Dieskau or Roman Trekel. Sensitive supported by the pianist Marie-Noëlle Kendall, he builds the third song, 'Fühlt meine Seele', to an ardent apotheosis.

In a clutch of Wolf Goethe settings, Miles rails and sneers magnificently in 'Prometheus' and majestically 'bows' the arching *bel canto* phrases of 'Der Sänger'. In 'Grenzen der Menschheit' (the philosophical antithesis of 'Prometheus') I craved more inwardness and a more concentrated *pianissimo*. Brahms's 'Feldeinsamkeit' – well sustained but surely too robust – provoked similar misgivings. And by maintaining the same dirge-like tempo throughout 'Nicht mehr zu dir zu gehen', contrary to Brahms's markings, Miles and Kendall miss the heightened sexual despair of the central verse. Against that, Miles is a vivid narrator in the grim ballad of homicide, 'Verrat', and in his element in the storm-swept 'Auf dem Kirchhofe'. Amid the prevailing slowness and gloom, always a danger in bass recitals, the odd lighter number – say, Brahms's 'Ständchen' – would have been welcome.

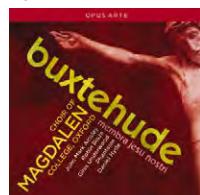
This is not, perhaps, a disc to play straight through. But it's a nobly sung recital, confirming that the leading English operatic *basso cantante* is also a Lieder singer of intelligence and insight. **Richard Wigmore**

Vier ernste Gesänge – selected comparisons:
Hotter, Moore (9/52^R, 8/09) (EMI) 264901-2
Fischer-Dieskau, Demus (10/61^R, 6/00) (ELOQ)
ELQ480 3527 or (DG) 463 509-2GFD
Quasthoff, Zeyer (8/01) (DG) 471 030-2GH
Gerhaher, Huber (ARTN) 74321 92771-2
Michelangelo Songs – selected comparisons:
Fischer-Dieskau, Barenboim

(8/77^R, 4/95^R) (DG) 477 8707GB6
Trekell, Kehring (3/03) (BERL) 0017532BC

Buxtehude

Membra Jesu nostri, BuxWV75
Robin Blaze countertenor **John Mark Ainsley** tenor **Giles Underwood** bass **Phantasm; Choir of Magdalen College, Oxford / Daniel Hyde**
Opus Arte © OACD9023D (61' • DDD)



Buxtehude's concise cantata-cycle *Membra Jesu nostri* is an exquisite contemplation of seven different parts of Christ's crucified body. Daniel Hyde's

colleagues from Phantasm provide the five-part viol consort in the penultimate cantata, 'Ad cor', but the rest of the cantatas feature two violins and basso continuo played by a small ad hoc band of expert instrumentalists led by violinist Simon Jones; the gentle articulation of the trembling strings in the *sonata in tremulo* that begins 'Ad genua' is judged perfectly, and the animated sonata that introduces 'Ad latus' has compelling vigour (although the ensuing chorus, 'Surge, amica mea', misses the contrast of soft sensuality that Buxtehude's writing invites).

The 26-strong Choir of Magdalen College swamp the half-dozen players in choruses – although the choir's confidently precise sonorities are laudable. Some solo parts are sung by eminent alumni Robin Blaze, John Mark Ainsley and Giles Underwood returning to their alma mater (they take the limelight in the fifth cantata 'Ad pectus'; Ainsley is less comfortable vocally than his colleagues). The consistent allocation of solo soprano arias to unison boys is an anachronistic policy that mars this recording, and in particular the intimate music in 'Ad cor' (played beautifully by Phantasm). However, there is rich splendour in choral textures during the final cantata 'Ad faciem', and this is one of the few versions in a vast discography that offers the alternative of boys' voices on the upper parts. **David Vickers**

Buxtehude

'Opera omnia XVIII - Vocal Works, Vol 8: Sacred Concertos, Arias and Miscellaneous Pieces'
Canon and Gigue, BuxWV121. Gen Himmel zu dem Vater mein, BuxWV32. Gott hilf mir, denn das Wasser geht mir bis an die Seele^a, BuxWV34. Herr, ich lasse dich nicht, BuxWV36. Lauda anima mea Dominum, BuxWV67. Meine Seele, willtu ruhn, BuxWV74. Mein Herz ist bereit, BuxWV73. O clemens, o mitis, BuxWV82. O Gottes Stadt, o güldnes Licht, BuxWV87. Salve desiderium, salve clamor gentium, BuxWV93. Sicut Moses exaltavit serpentem, BuxWV97. Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied, BuxWV98. Surrexit Christus hodie, BuxWV99. Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme - BuxWV100; BuxWV101. Wie soll ich dich empfangen, BuxWV109. **Amsterdam Baroque ^aChoir and Orchestra / Ton Koopman**

Challenge Classics M ② CC72257 (135' • DDD)



This marks the last issue in the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra's traversal of the music of Dieterich Buxtehude, a landmark acknowledged by Ton Koopman

in a short text in the accompanying booklet. This volume is devoted to 'Sacred concertos, arias and miscellaneous pieces', dating from the composer's nearly 40 years' residency in Lübeck. Any fears that the concluding volume might be an assortment of odds and ends are unwarranted (the little six-part canon is rather lovely). In the event, several of the sacred concertos included here are quite extended pieces, ranging in mood from the joyous Eastertide *Surrexit Christus bodie* to the inward, penitential *O clemens, o mitis*. There's an equally rich variety of scorings and forms, from the sacred dialogue of *Herr, ich lasse dich nicht* to chorale-based works: the famous *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme* receives two extended settings. Truth to tell, some of the longer numbers may possibly overstay their welcome; but overall there's plenty of very fine music here (the pithier *Meine Seele, willtu ruhn* is particularly engaging).

A particular favourite scoring seems to be for two sopranos and bass: of the soloists, Klaus Mertens distinguishes himself, whereas the two sopranos are generally not as well matched as one might wish, which proves a problem in some of the solo numbers as well. In the final number, *Gott hilf mir, denn das Wasser geht mir*, they are joined by the Amsterdam Baroque Choir, which some may find disconcerting, given the exclusive prevalence of soloists hitherto. Throughout, Koopman himself leads the instrumental ensemble from the organ. A pleasing pungency is lent the continuo line by the presence of the dulcian, a touch whose charm rarely palls. Barring the slow introduction to *Surrexit Christus*, in which the tuning goes slightly awry, Koopman's valedictory plea on behalf of Buxtehude's music, touchingly expressed in writing, is stylishly backed up in performance.

Fabrice Fitch

Handel

'Peace and Celebration'
Four Coronation Anthems, HWV258-261.
Ode for the Birthday of Queen Anne, HWV74.
Concerto grosso, Op 3 No 2 HWV313
Alex Potter countertenor Choir of Clare College, Cambridge; European Union Baroque Orchestra / Lars Ulrik Mortensen org

Obsidian ④ CD711 (70' • DDD • T)

Recorded live at St John's Smith Square, London, September 3, 2013



Eternal source of light divine was written (but perhaps not performed) for the

birthday of Queen Anne in 1713. The Ode was paired before with Handel's four anthems for the coronation of George II (1727) in a memorable recording by the Choir of King's College, Cambridge, and the Academy of Ancient Music (EMI, A/01), but this repeat prescription is justified because of the refreshing spontaneity of this warts-and-all live recording made last year at St John's Smith Square. Clare College Choir are excellent in every technical respect and there's no hint of posturing clichés: their exclamations of 'God save the King!' during *Zadok the Priest* seem more like a statement of confident hope than mere bombast. Plenty of directors know what to do with Handel's trumpets and drums in D major but Lars Ulrik Mortensen comes into his own in the contrasting middle sections: the plaintive oboes and hushed strings in the middle section of *Let thy hand be strengthened* ('Let justice and judgment'), the gorgeous ritornello of 'Upon thy right hand did stand the Queen' (*My heart is inditing*) and the affectionate gracefulness of 'Exceeding glad shall he be' (*The King shall rejoice*) are all moulded sublimely. The Purcellian rapture of the Ode's first part is captured by trumpeter Sebastian Philpott and countertenor Alex Potter; in the following sequence of numbers Mortensen and his youthful crew radiate the courtly joy of Handel's first English-language masterpiece. EUBO also perform Op 3 No 2; their rapturous dialogue between two cellos and solo oboe in the *Largo* puts some more experienced Baroque bands to shame. **David Vickers**

Hersant

Stabat mater. Psalm 130 (Aus tiefer Not)^a.

Falling Star. Clair obscur

Ensemble Sequenza 9.3 / Catherine Simonpietri with Christine Plubeau va da gamba

François Saint-Yves org

Decca ④ 481 0486 (60' • DDD)



Among the generation of French composers who emerged after the dissolution of the avant-garde, Philippe Hersant (b1948) occupies a distinctive position through his perspective on the musical past. This disc features four works in which the chamber choir is joined by viola da gamba in settings which breathe austerity and eloquence in equal measure. Certainly there is nothing overly illustrative about a *Stabat mater* (2002) whose sombre traversal of the text is intensified by the instrumental writing,

though this approach is more tellingly deployed in *Psalm 130* (1994), with its radiant passages for solo female voices and understated figuration from positive organ. *Falling Star* (2005) superimposes male and female voices in its striking treatments of respectively fatalistic and ecstatic poems by Henry King and John Donne, while *Clair obscur* (2008) is a song-cycle on texts by German Baroque mystical poets that takes in Quirinus Kuhlmann's startlingly radical 'The Alteration of Human Plagues' before ending with a transcendent setting of Catharina von Greiffenberg's 'On the Peaceful Time of Night'.

How listeners respond to this music will depend on their perspective as to the setting of religious texts in the modern era. Whatever else, Hersant's is as consistent in approach as it is personal in expression, and has been well served here by the superbly disciplined response of Ensemble Sequenza 9.3 under Catherine Simonpietri. The sound predicates atmosphere over detail but this is rarely to the detriment either of the choral texture or of Christine Plubeau's sustained intensity. Well worth investigating. **Richard Whitehouse**

Karaïndrou

Medea

Eleni Karaïndrou voc **Sokratis Sinopoulos** Constantinople lute/lyra **Harris Lambrakis** ney **Andreas Katsigiannis** santouri **Andreas Papas** bendir **Nikos Guinos**, Marie-Cecile Boulard, **Alexandros Arkadopoulos** cts **Yiorgos Kaloudis** vc **Female Chorus / Antonis Kontogeorgiou** ECM New Series Ⓜ 376 2816 (45' • DDD)



Eleni Karaïndrou (b1941) is best known for her cinema scores, especially to

Theo Angelopoulos's films (5/99, 12/04, 6/09). The 17 numbers on this new CD come from her music to Antonis Antypas's revival of Euripides's *Medea* (2011). Director and composer are no strangers, having collaborated on *The Trojan Women*, issued by ECM a decade back and featuring Sokratis Sinopoulos playing the Constantinople lyra (7/02). As before, Karaïndrou's music is full of arresting and atmospheric textures, featuring unusual instruments such as the Constantinople lute (aka *lafta* or *lauta*), Constantinople lyra, ney (it is unclear whether the Turkish, Arab or Persian instrument, all subtly different, is used), *bendir* (a drum also with diverse incarnations) and *santouri* (a Greek variant of the cimbalom), in a uniquely constituted ensemble also employing a trio

of clarinets, solo cello and female voices, one being that of the composer herself singing Medea's two Laments (trs 5 and 7).

The difficulty I have with Karaïndrou's music, however haunting it may be – and it can be very haunting – is its lack of drama. She is very adept at painting a mood but there is no real development of the musical material or even the portraits of the characters. The terrifying story of Medea has inspired a dozen operas (most recently by Theodorakis, 1990, and Aribert Reimann, 2010) and two ballets, Barber's most famously. Karaïndrou may not have aimed for the melodrama of Charpentier, Mayr or Cherubini, or even the instrumental virtuosity of *The Cave of the Heart*, but its lack of theatrical momentum and over-reliance on stock harmonic progressions is curious and disappointing. Point-to-point, there are things to relish, nonetheless, the performances are well executed and ECM's sound is superb.

Guy Rickards

Orff

Carmina Burana

Sarah Tynan sop **Andrew Kennedy** ten **Rodion Pogossov** bar **Trinity Boys Choir; London Philharmonic Choir and Orchestra / Hans Graf** LPO (M) LPO0076 (60' • DDD • T/t)
Recorded live at the Royal Festival Hall, London, April 6, 2013

Orff · Beethoven · Handel

Beethoven Leonore - Overture No 3 Handel
Messiah - Hallelujah Orff Carmina Burana
Sally Matthews sop **Lawrence Brownlee** ten
Christian Gerhaher bar **Berlin State and Cathedral Boys' Choirs; Berlin Radio Chorus; Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra / Sir Simon Rattle**
Video director **Manfred Wittelsberger**
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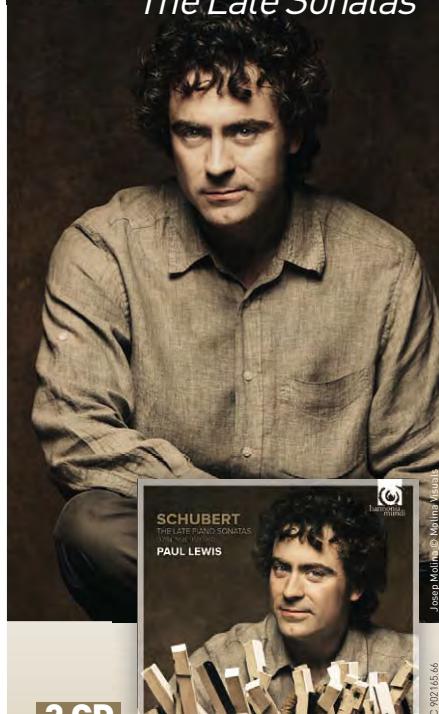


Despite being regarded by some commentators as the work of an 'odious opportunist', Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana* remains one of the most performed (and recorded) 20th-century choral works. With the backing of the Nazi state, this 'carnal cantata' brought him wealth and notoriety – as well as helping to sell millions of bottles of aftershave.

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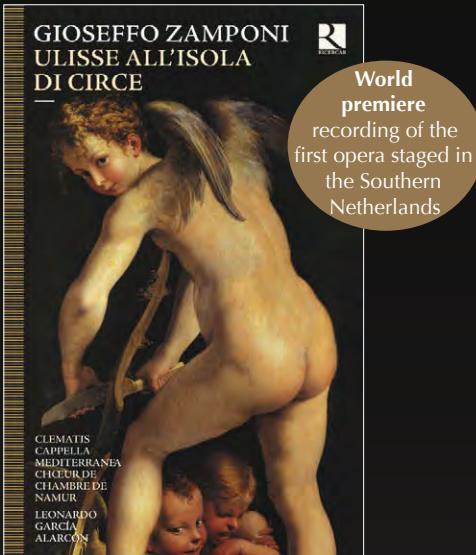
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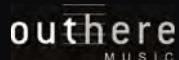
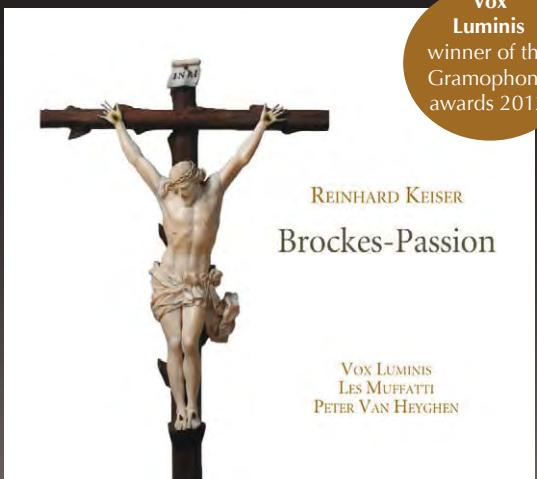
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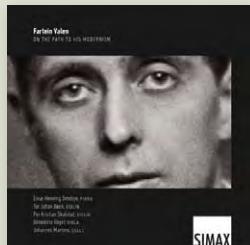


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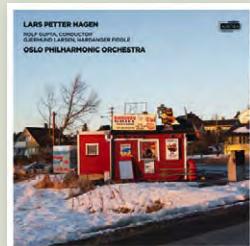
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The most recent commercial recording comes from an LPO concert given in April 2013 as part of the Southbank's 'The Rest Is Noise' festival, where it was preceded by Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*. One can see immediately how much the Bavarian absorbed from the Russian's musical thumbprints. Rhythmic impetus is paramount (helped by a generous percussion section), with incisive block chords for the chorus, and dramatic contrasts of tempo and dynamics.

Rattle's performance (on New Year's Eve 2004) was released in audio format in 2005. At the time Rattle's penchant for brisk tempi raised a few eyebrows, although with the visual element this feels less worrisome. Timings between the two interpretations are quite close, in fact.

Both choruses sing with tremendous verve and attack, aided by the almost complete lack of contrapuntal writing. There are a couple of moments when the Berlin singers occasionally stumble ahead of Rattle's beat, despite being glued to his gaze. For the LPO Sarah Tynan was a strong substitute for an indisposed Sally Matthews. She copes well with her exposed lines but lacks some of Matthews's floating finesse on the Blu-ray. Gerhaher (for Rattle) is much more characterful than Pogossov, who tends to be throaty, although Gerhaher struggles with his falsetto passages; and Andrew Kennedy's roasting swan (for the LPO) is much more beautiful than Lawrence Brownlee's. Kennedy maintains a searing lyricism despite the cruelly high top Cs and Ds.

As a listening experience the LPO disc is ahead. The recording is much warmer and better balanced, with just one stifled distant cough noted, unlike Berlin's bronchial burghers, and superlative playing.

Malcolm Riley

Pärt

Seven Magnificat Antiphons. I am the True Vine. The Woman with the Alabaster Box. Tribute to Caesar. Berlin Mass^a. Magnificat
Byrd Ensemble / Markdavin Obenza with Sheila Bristow org
Scribe (SRCD4 (70' • DDD • T/t)



While one might legitimately question the need for another anthology of choral music by Arvo Pärt, this recording creates the illusion of hearing the music for the first time. The small size and the clear, fresh voices of the Byrd Ensemble, an American group with a strong background

in Renaissance music, mean that the dissonances and their consequent resolutions in the *Seven Magnificat Antiphons* and the *Magnificat* in particular are brought into focus in a truly remarkable way.

The precision of the performances, and the great attention paid to the enunciation of the texts, does not mean that they are cold or uninvolving, however: there is also a sense of space, of unhurriedness, that lets the music breathe. This is vitally important particularly for the narrative sense of the three English-language pieces recorded here (*I am the True Vine*, *The Woman with the Alabaster Box* and *Tribute to Caesar*), which depend greatly both on a sense of singing through the pauses in the musical phrases, and of continuity as they move from one voice to another. The clarity of the recording is also a vital factor in this.

The *Berlin Mass* also receives a wonderfully crystalline performance, with organ registrations very sensitively chosen by Sheila Bristow, but for me it is the *Magnificat* and the *Antiphons* that show best the Byrd Ensemble's ability to enter into the spirit of this music, simultaneously 'stripped' and loaded with meaning. Highly recommended. **Ivan Moody**

Poulenc

Stabat mater. Sept Répons de Ténèbres
Carolyn Sampson sop Cappella Amsterdam; Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir; Estonian National Symphony Orchestra / Daniel Reuss
Harmonia Mundi (HMC90 2149 (62' • DDD • T/t)



The comparative rarity here is the *Sept Répons de Ténèbres* that Poulenc wrote in 1961

to a commission from Leonard Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic. The music manifests the familiar Poulenc fingerprints of perfumed harmony, sensual melody and abrupt cadences but there is a fiercer, more troubled personality at work here as well. The dark import of the Tenebrae Responsories seems to have struck a particular chord with Poulenc nearing the end of his life, and here the chromatic twists in, for instance, the 'Caligaverunt oculi mei a fletu meo' (My eyes are darkened by my tears) suggest an anguish in the face of mortality that is both powerful and poignant. Poulenc wanted all-male voices for the *Sept Répons*, with (as in Bernstein's soon-to-be-composed *Chichester Psalms*) a boy treble as a central protagonist, but here Carolyn Sampson eloquently expresses the isolation and

apprehension of the solo line, and the mixed voices of the Cappella Amsterdam and the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir with the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra under Daniel Reuss sensitively and dramatically project the sombre, fearful, abject world in which Poulenc finds himself.

Theirs is also a fine performance of the *Stabat mater*. Again, Poulenc was confronted with death, that of his friend Christian Bérard, but grief, serenity and tenderness coalesce to a greater degree here than in the *Sept Répons des Ténèbres*. The choir and orchestra rise fully to the eruptions of emotion in the 'Quis est homo' but are no less compelling in quiet moments of contemplation.

Geoffrey Norris

Purcell

'Music for a While - Improvisations on Purcell' Come Ye Sons of Art, Z323 - Strike the viol. Dido and Aeneas - Ah! Belinda; When I am laid in earth. An Evening Hymn, 'Now that the sun hath veiled his light', Z193. The Fairy Queen - O, let me weep; One charming night. Hail, Bright Cecilia!, Z328 - In vain the am'rous flute; Wondrous machine. Here the deities approve, Z339. Man that is born of a woman, Z27. The Mock Marriage, Z605 - Twas within a furlong of Edinburgh town. Music for a while, Z583. O solitude, my sweetest choice, Z406. Timon of Athens, Z632 - Curtain Tune; Hark how the songsters of the grove. Who can from joy refrain?, Z342 - A prince of glorious race Raquel Andueza sop Vincenzo Capezzuto, Philippe Jaroussky, Dominique Visse countertenors L'Arpeggiata / Christina Pluhar Erato (2564 63375-0 (70' • DDD); deluxe edition (CD + DVD) 2564 63620-3



Having applied Baroque instruments to 20th-century Latin standards in 'Los pájaros perdidos' (Virgin, 5/12), for her latest experiment Christina Pluhar brings jazz to the expressive sophistication, ground basses and killer tunes of Purcell. It is no mere dabbling: the expected Baroque continuo is here but the listener will probably be struck more by Gianluigi Trovesi's klezmer-tinged jazz clarinet, Wolfgang Muthspiel's soulful electric and acoustic guitars and Francesco Turrisi's cool piano licks. Nor is anyone afraid of tampering with the text: 'Music for a while' is just one of the familiar numbers to undergo occasional subtle reharmonisation.

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really got something. 'Strike the viol' acquires an irresistible swing, 'Twas within a furlong of Edinburgh town' goes boxcar, and 'Here the deities approve' gains incisive rhythmic push. The quality of the musicianship helps, both of L'Arpeggiata and of their jazz guests, and together they succeed in making the mix of elements seem for the most part perfectly natural. Raquel Andueza is heartbreakingly vulnerable in Dido's Lament and there is sublime control of line from Philippe Jaroussky, who finds expressive licence in a smoky *Evening Hymn* that he might not have allowed himself on another occasion. Vincenzo Capezzuto's girlish falsetto is extraordinary, although his numbers (notably an ugly 'One charming night') tend to be the ones where song and arrangement fit least comfortably.

In short, most of these songs retain their essential character, and far from having his genius dimmed, Purcell still shines as a writer of songs timelessly receptive to reinterpretation and capable of reaching the heart by the power of melody alone. They are the qualities of a good pop song of course, and in them Purcell was in the Lennon/McCartney league.

Lindsay Kemp

Schubert

'Lieder, Vol 8 - Wanderers Nachtlied'

Abendbilder, D650^a. An den Mond, D296^b.

An die Entfernte, D765^a. An die untergehende Sonne, D457^a. An Schwager Kronos, D369^b.

An Sie, D288^b. Auf dem Wasser zu singen, D774^a.

Bei dir allein, D866 No 2^a. Die Blumensprache, D519^a.

Dass sie hier gewesen!, D775^b. Das war ich, D174^b.

Der Einsame, D800^b. Erinnerung (Totenopfer), D101^a.

Erster Verlust, D226^b. Furcht der Geliebten ('An Cidli'), D285^b.

Ganymed, D544^a. Geheimes, D719^b.

Geisternähe, D100^b. Heidenrölein, D257^b.

Im Frühling, D882^a.

Lachen und Weinen, D777^b. Die Liebe hat gelogen, D751^b.

Litanei auf das Fest Allerseelen, D343^a.

Der Musensohn, D764^b.

Nach einem Gewitter, D561^a.

Rastlose Liebe, D138^b.

Die Rose, D745^a.

Das Rosenband, D280^b.

Schäfers Klagelied, D121^b.

Die Sterne, D684^b.

Der Tod und das Mädchen, D531^a.

Trost in Tränen, D120^b.

Versunken, D715^b.

Viola, D786^a.

Wandrs Nachtlied II, D768^b.

Der Zwerg, D771^a

Matthias Goerne bar

^aHelmut Deutsch, ^bErich Schneider pf

Harmonia Mundi M ② HMC90 2109/10

(131' • DDD • T/t)



Schubert is once reported to have exclaimed to a friend, 'Do you know any

cheerful music? I don't.' His alleged words might stand as an epigraph to this latest volume of Matthias Goerne's Schubert Edition. With his velvety, 'covered' timbre and innate seriousness of manner, Goerne has never been a natural bringer of jollity. When the Schubertian spirit lightens, he can be animated, ardent, but hardly exultant. 'Der Musensohn' has abundant energy and character but never quite soars – though admittedly the slightly boomy acoustic (more apparent on this second disc) compromises the buoyancy of Eric Schneider's accompaniment. Nor do I hear any playfulness or sensuality in 'Versunken', perhaps Schubert's most overtly erotic outpouring.

Yet if we accept that lightness and charm are not within Goerne's orbit, his singing is always scrupulous (his *legato*, as ever, a model for any aspiring Lieder singer) and his interpretations profoundly considered. His performances of several familiar songs are as fine as any I know, not least 'Der Tod und das Mädchen', the girl's pleading anxious rather than fevered, Death's response both implacable and compassionate – and how beautifully the ever-perceptive Helmut Deutsch weights and 'voices' the chords of the keyboard prelude. The twilit mystery and grotesquerie of 'Der Zwerg' are as powerfully characterised as by Fischer-Dieskau (with Moore, DG), without his great predecessor's distortions of tone for dramatic effect.

In 'Auf dem Wasser zu singen', more melancholy in feeling than usual, Goerne caresses Schubert's graceful lines with yearning tenderness (not once on these discs will you hear a melody distorted by bumps, bulges or unscripted accents). He digs deep into his bass resonances for a thrillingly energised performance of 'An Schwager Kronos', while 'An den Mond' and the second 'Wandrs Nachtlied' are unsurpassed in their unearthly inwardness.

If Goerne usually vindicates his penchant for broad tempi, the entrancing immobility of 'Litanei' had me open-mouthed. Granted, the evenness and breath control are masterly. But for me the grave simplicity of Schubert's lovely melody is indulgently, absurdly, inflated. To end on this negative note, though, would traduce singer and pianists. Not the least of pleasures here is the depths the baritone finds in relatively little-known songs such as the noble sunset evocation 'An die untergehende Sonne' and three Klopstock settings of Mozartian grace and tenderness. At his finest, here and elsewhere, Goerne touches greatness as a Schubertian.

Richard Wigmore

Schubert

Winterreise, D911

Jonas Kaufmann ten Helmut Deutsch pf

Sony Classical ⑧ 88883 795652 (70' • DDD • T/t)



For sheer vocal splendour, Jonas Kaufmann is unrivalled in

Winterreise since Jon Vickers, whose controversial 1983 recording is revelatory or grotesque, according to taste. At moments – say, the clinching final phrase of each verse of 'Wasserflut' – Kaufmann unleashes a formidable operatic blade of tone. Yet the dominant impression of this deeply considered *Winterreise* is of gentle, rueful introspection, momentarily flaring up in embittered protest (*forte* high notes invariably bring a visceral thrill), then drifting into trance-like resignation.

In the booklet-note – fashioned as a conversation between Kaufmann and pianist Helmut Deutsch – the tenor cites the wanderer's abiding death wish and his incipient insanity. In the closing 'Der Leiermann' (which ends with a sudden wail of anguish), he is 'like a madman talking to the ghost of a dead man.' (Deutsch ventures to differ on this.) On vocal evidence alone, though, he does not stress the disturbing psychopathology of *Winterreise* as do fellow tenors Peter Schreier and Ian Bostridge. Kaufmann begins 'Gute Nacht' with a chastened delicacy and finds a melting *pianissimo*, devoid of irony, for the bittersweet final verse. 'Erstarrung', taken quite broadly, in response to Schubert's autograph marking 'Not too quickly', is nostalgically reflective rather than urgently impassioned, rising to despair only at the final climax. Here and elsewhere Deutsch's clear, precise textures, plus the use of Schubert's original high key, brings dividends in the dialogues between voice and piano bass.

From the hallucinatory, half-whispered 'Irrlicht', Kaufmann's wanderer becomes ever more prone to numb reverie. The haunted *ppp* colour he finds for the close of 'Frühlingstraum' is heart-rending. In 'Im Dorfe' he contemplates the sleeping villagers with tenderness rather than derision, and in 'Im Wirtshaus' suggests a deepening life-weariness, with no hint of defiance in the last line. The final upshot is a profoundly touching winter journey, one that conveys all of the wanderer's pathos, vulnerability and isolation. Schreier's journey across the snowbound landscape is more engulfing, a merciless portrayal of emotional and spiritual disintegration that

is only enhanced (in this cycle) by the astringent edge on his tone. But Kaufmann's combination of vocal beauty and verbal sensitivity (his diction always a model), and the fastidiously textured and coloured playing of Helmut Deutsch, make this new recording an important addition to the vast *Winterreise* discography.

Richard Wigmore

Selected comparisons:

Vickers, Schauf (1/93) (VAI) VAI1007-2

Schreier, Schiff (5/94) (DECC) 436 122-2DH
or 475 2682DTR3

Bostridge, Andsnes (9/04^b) (EMI) 973953-2

Steffani

Fileno, *idolo mio*. Guardati, o core. Hai finite di lusingarmi. Il più felice e sfortunato amante. Lagrime dolorosa. Spezza amor l'arco e gli strali
Marta Mathéu sop **Aurelio Schiavoni** counterten
Mauro Borgioni bass Accademia Hermans /
Fabio Ciofini org/hpd
Brilliant Classics © 94299 (58' • DDD • T/t)



The musical reputation of Agostino Steffani (1654-1728) is spreading gradually

beyond the awareness of a few scholarly cognoscenti but his pastoral solo cantatas remain obscure fare. It is uncertain when the cantatas contained in the collection *Sei scherzi a voce sola con accompagnamento di piffari o di violini* were composed but Steffani sent them to Duke Francesco d'Este by 1694 (the manuscript is still preserved in Modena).

Accademia Hermans adhere fully to Steffani's imaginative scoring, using a pair of violins, oboes or recorders as the composer directs. Marta Mathéu sings with unaffected ease and eloquence in *Fileno, idolo mio*; Ciofini's switching from harpsichord over to chamber organ for the lyrical central aria 'Vieni, o solo' conjures an atmosphere more suitable to religious piety than for expressing an unnamed Arcadian nymph's hopeless adoration of Fileno but the violins (led expertly by Enrico Gatti) play with rapturous charm. A woodwind trio (two oboes, with bassoon on the continuo line) works persuasively in *Hai finite di lusingarmi*, especially in the lament 'Cara Filli, oh Dio pietà'. The unusual obbligato partnership of an oboe and dulcian in *Spezza amor l'arco e gli strali* illustrates Steffani's imagination for instrumentation. Plangent violins offer a solemn mood for the minor-key lover's lament that begins *Il più felice e sfortunato amante* (sung expressively by Aurelio Schiavoni), and the lone bass cantata

Lagrime dolorosa features doleful recorders as counterweights to Mauro Borgioni's ardent (but occasionally unpolished) singing. These adept performances shed further light on Steffani's merits.

David Vickers

Tallis · Sheppard

'Medieval Chant - Tallis Lamentations'

Anonymous (Plainchant) Pange lingua gloriosi.

Compline for Passontide. In monte Oliveti.

Tristis est anima mea. Litany after Lauds for Maundy Thursday **Sheppard** In manus tuas I

Tallis Lamentations of Jeremiah

Tenebrae Consort / Nigel Short

Bene Arte/Signum © SIGCD901 (66' • DDD • T/t)



The quiet contemplation of Compline – the final service of the monastic day – provides the framework for this latest disc from Tenebrae. The choir's full, mixed-voice forces are here distilled down to just five male singers, swelling from unison plainchant to the polyphonic intricacy of Tallis's *Lamentations* in a sequence of music and texts for Holy Week.

It's a bold programme – unshowy to the point of wilfulness, taking music so directly, so functionally liturgical and presenting it for aesthetic ends. At one stage during the prayers the voices break from song into speech, muttered invocations reminding us of the greater purpose behind music that can easily become a sort of spiritual muzak.

By restoring Tallis's *Lamentations* and Sheppard's *In manus tuas* to their original context, Tenebrae rediscover their singular beauty and immediacy. The fragility of the single voices (and the darker shades generated by these lower, male-voice keys) summons a world of private, secret devotion, where abstract grief becomes the very real conflict of Catholics under a Protestant monarch. Textures are translucent, each individual voice offering its own personal musical plea.

Nigel Short's singers find an intensity here that's never overworked. Even the punishingly high tenor moments in the Sheppard don't obtrude texturally into the disc's larger musical narrative, one that gains pace from the simple call and response of psalms and prayers into the webbed polyphony of the larger works. This is simplicity at once artful and artless – perfectly poised at the junction of recital and rite.

Alexandra Coghlan

Tavener

G B R

Ikon of Light^a. Funeral Ikos. The Lamb^b.

Great Canon of St Andrew of Crete^c

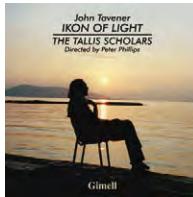
Jeremy White voc **The Tallis Scholars** /

Peter Phillips, **John Tavener** with

^amembers of the Chilingirian Quartet

Gimell © GIMSE404 (78' • DDD)

From ⓠ 1585-05 (12/84); ⓠ 1585-02 (4/83)



Sometime back in the mid-1980s I was sent a review copy of the original LP recording

on which all these performances (with the exception of the *Great Canon of St Andrew of Crete*) first appeared. What my critical response was – or even who published my review – has long since been forgotten, but the LP continues frequently to grace my turntable. *Ikon of Light*, with its huge central 'Mystic Prayer to the Holy Spirit' characterised by soprano solos soaring above the magically weightless choral texture countered by basses descending into unfathomable depths, is some of the most profoundly beautiful music I know. It was also my first exposure to *The Lamb*, lovingly directed here by the composer himself, while the translucent 'Alleluias' of the *Funeral Ikos* have lost none of their power to stir visions of glorious eternity even now, 30 years on.

Recordings of Tavener have come and gone in the intervening years but it is not just mawkish nostalgia that makes me welcome this recording's latest manifestation on CD so enthusiastically, despite its somewhat hard-edged sound. Enjoying a close working relationship with Tavener at the time, The Tallis Scholars imbued these performances with a real sense of ownership and an innate feel for the graceful shaping of his chant-inspired lines. Even in their relative infancy, The Tallis Scholars under Peter Phillips produced a remarkably distinctive sound, unerringly juxtaposing fervent melodies and impeccably enunciated texts (Jeremy White is faultless as he intones the words of St Andrew of Crete) with ecstatically shimmering choral textures in a way which, like the music, verges on the other-worldly. These are performances which will, inevitably, long outlive any critical response I might have to offer. **Marc Rochester**

Tulve

Arboles lloran por lluvia^a. L'équinoxe de l'âme^b.

Extinction des choses vues^c. Reyah hadas 'ala^d. silences/larmes^e

^{abe}**Arianna Savall** sop^btriple hp ^c**Charles Barbier**,

^{ad}**Taniel Kirikal** counterten ^e**Riivo Kallasmaa** ob



Unrivalled since Jon Vickers: Jonas Kaufmann and Helmut Deutsch on their 'profoundly touching winter journey' (review on page 79)

aMarco Ambrosini *nyckelharpa* **e**Helena Tulve
glasses/wind chimes **ad**Ensemble Vox Clamantis;
dEnsemble Hortus Musicus; **b**NYYD Quartet /
abd Jaan-Eik Tulve; **c**Estonian National Symphony
Orchestra / Olari Elts
ECM New Series Ⓜ 476 4500 (61' • DDD • T/t)



Estonia continues to produce a wealth of composers out of all proportion to its size and population, and Helena Tulve (b1972) is clearly one with whom to reckon. Four of the works on this 'portrait' disc are vocal, yet this hardly signifies uniformity of expression – hence the sheer timbral allure drawn from an early music consort with the setting of a Yemenite Jewish text in *Reyab hadas 'ala* ('The Perfume of the Myrtle Rises'), or expressive acuity conjured from the metaphysical riddles of *silences/larmes*. A Sufi mystical text is the basis for *L'équinoxe de l'âme* and here the often melismatic soprano line is confronted by the grating textures of a string quartet. Contrast again with *Arboles lloran por lluvia* ('Trees Cry for Rain'), whose Sephardic Jewish text of unrequited longing summons a suitably ecstatic response from the

intertwining voices – thrown into relief by the distinctive sound of a nyckelharpa and the hieratic vocal consort.

Extinction des choses vues might seem out of place but both in its conception and realisation follows on naturally from the above. In its evoking the 'extinction of things seen', it looks to the earlier orchestral music of Kaija Saariaho in its dense textures that take on greater harmonic focus prior to a *morendo* ending on the most poetic of dissonances. The orchestra do it justice under Olari Elts, with the remaining works no less finely realised; good to hear the unmistakable voice of Arianna Savall in a context which differs only in relative terms. The recordings are unmistakably ECM in their distanced yet atmospheric ambience, while the booklet-note is informative if a little too fanciful in tone. **Richard Whitehouse**

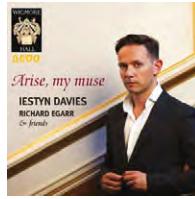
'Arise, my Muse'

G **G**
Blow Amphion Anglicus – Poor Celadon, he sighs in vain. Venus and Adonis – Suite Clarke Come, come along for a dance and a song – The Glory of the Arcadian Groves Croft Ye tuneful numbers **G** Gabrieli Sonata XXI Purcell Birthday Ode, Z320 – Arise, my Muse. Celebrate this festival, Z321 – Crown the altar. If music be the food of love, Z379b. Come ye sons of Art, away,

Z339 – Strike the viol. Hail! bright Cecilia, Z328 – 'Tis Nature's voice. King Arthur, Z628 – Fairest Isle. O solitude, my sweetest choice, Z406.

Welcome to all the Pleasures, Z339 – Here the deities approve. Yorkshire Feast Song, Z333 – The pale and the purple rose. Fantasia: Three Parts on a Ground, Z731

Iestyn Davies *countertenor* **Richard Egarr** *hp* with **Tabea Debus**, **Pamela Thorby** *recs* **Bojan Čičić**, **Stephen Pedder** *vns* **Julia Kuhn** *vn/va* **Mark Levy** *va da gamba* **William Carter** *theologr* Wigmore Hall Live Ⓜ WHLIVE0065 (59' • DDD • T) Recorded live, February 27, 2013



It says a lot about Iestyn Davies's musical instincts that his second Wigmore Hall Live disc is less a solo showcase than a chamber recital in which he is just one member of a superb ensemble cast. Led from the harpsichord by Richard Egarr, the instrumentalists here take by turns both supporting and starring roles in music from Restoration London that roams far beyond the obvious Purcell.

While Davies offers appealing performances of classic works – 'O solitude, my sweetest choice' is exquisitely poised,

and 'Strike the viol' is transformed from politely swaying dance into a muscular, swinging piece of folk-like abandon – some of the best things here are the least familiar. Jeremiah Clarke's 'The Glory of the Arcadian Groves' unfolds into elegant melodic arabesques with support from two suitably bucolic recorders, while John Blow's 'Poor Celadon' laments neglect of his beloved nymph with courtly poise, in melting phrases perfectly suited to Davies's lovely *legato*.

A particular highlight is the Suite from Blow's *Venus and Adonis*, in which Egarr's band impersonate a cheeky Cupid and a heavy-footed huntsman with equal verve. Purcell's instrumental music is represented by the *Fantasia: Three Parts on a Ground* – possibly the earliest surviving example of the ground basses that underpin so much of the composer's music. False relations wink and strings swagger, and if the result doesn't quite achieve the same attack as London Baroque's wonderful recording (Harmonia Mundi, 10/90), there's a rawness here that lends a welcome clarity to the lines.

This is a disc that reminds us why live recital programmes are such a valuable part of recorded repertoire. Rather than the monochrome focus on the solo artist permitted by the artifice of the studio, we get a fully rounded musical experience that feels more satisfying both for performers and listeners. **Alexandra Coglan**

'Conversazioni II'

'Duelling Cantatas'

Caldara Trio Sonata, Op 1 No 5

Gasparini Io che dal terzo ciel (Venere e Adone)

Handel Amarilli vezzosa (Il duello amoroso), HWV82. Rondeau in G (attrib). Sonata, HWV579

A Scarlatti Questo silenzio ombroso (Il Sonno)

D Scarlatti Keyboard Sonatas -Kk32; Kk63

Anna Dennis sop **Andrew Radley** counterten

Sounds Baroque / Julian Perkins hpd/org

Avie (F) AV2296 (79' • DDD • T/t)



Sounds Baroque follow their debut album (10/11) with another engaging snapshot of the Arcadian Academy's Sunday afternoon 'conversations', magnets for the Roman intellectual elite held in the sumptuous palazzi of Marquis (later Prince) Ruspoli, Cardinal Ottoboni et al. The programme unfolds as a series of musical duels, bookended by substantial cantatas by Francesco Gasparini and Handel, and taking in a fine trio sonata by Caldara and the keyboard works that perhaps featured

in the famous Roman gladiatorial contest between Handel and Domenico Scarlatti.

In Gasparini's attractive *Io che dal terzo ciel*, Anna Dennis, pure and limpid of tone, and the pleasing countertenor of Andrew Radley sigh and coo beguilingly as Venus and Adonis. The musette duet 'La pastorella ove il boschetto ombreggia', where the ever-lively continuo group evokes bucolic tambourines, is especially delightful. Their voices combine eloquently in the grieving suspensions of Scarlatti's *Questo silenzio ombroso*, even if the central minuet seems rather too jauntily paced for its lamenting text.

Handel's *Il duello amoroso*, in which the shepherd Daliso is kept dangling, then rejected (for not being man enough) by Amaryllis, is at once the most cynical and most operatic of Handel's Italian cantatas. Dennis and Radley could have brought more savour to the acerbically witty Italian text (compare Andreas Scholl and Hélène Guilmette on a rival Harmonia Mundi disc). But their singing is mellifluous, nimble and gracefully shaped, with Dennis nicely catching Amaryllis's mix of playful caprice and dismissive spite. In the solo pieces Sounds Baroque director Julian Perkins is neat and elegant, if perhaps a tad contained in Handel's showy G major Sonata, while in the Caldara the solo violins entwine soulfully and spar exuberantly by turns. As ever, Avie's presentation is first-rate, with full texts and translations, and informative essays by David Vickers and Perkins himself.

Richard Wigmore

Amarilli veziosa – selected comparison:

Scholl, Guilmette, Accademia Bizantina, Dantone

(5/07) (HARM) HMC90 1957

'Destino Mexicano'

Anonymous Hanacpachap cussicuinin.

Mañanicas floridas. La Petenera Arañés

Chacona: A la vida bona Araújo Ay andar a tocar

a cantar a baylar **G Fernandes** Andrés do queda el Ganado. A no teneros mi Dios. Dame albricia mano Anton. Fransiquiya donde vamo. Pois con tanta graça. Si nos enprestara oy Dios

Franco Dios Itlaço nantzine. Tururu farara con son **Padilla** A la xácará xacarilla

Zéspedes Convidando está la noche

Lotte Betts-Dean sop **Daniel Thompson** ten

La Compañía / Danny Lucin

La Compañía (F) LCR4632 (52' • DDD)



Having touched briefly on New World repertoire in their previous release 'Ay Portugal' (ABC Classics), Melbourne-based

ensemble La Compañía go the whole hog here with a disc of music from late-Renaissance Mexico (with two Peruvian exceptions). Consisting of catchily cheerful villancicos and other short pieces on lightly borne sacred subjects by cathedral musicians of European origin such as Gaspar Fernandes, Juan Gutiérrez de Padilla and Juan de Araujo, but reflecting local styles, preoccupations and even languages, this is the kind of South American repertoire that Isabel Palacios's Camerata de Caracas enjoyably brought to light in the 1990s (A/00), and which has since been successfully promoted over three CDs by Ex Cathedra (8/03, 6/08). (It should not to be confused, however, with the more staid stuff of Florilegium's 'Bolivian Baroque' discs.)

Ex Cathedra inevitably give works like Araujo's *Ay andar*, Zéspedes's *Convidando está la noche* and the ubiquitous *Hanacpachap cussicuinin* a choral slant but La Compañía's approach is more small-scale and intimate, with emphasis on the wind instruments which, according to the booklet-notes, were preferred to strings in the New World. Several of the works are performed without voices on fruitily satisfying combinations of shawm, cornett, dulcians and sackbuts, backed up by bass viol, guitars and percussion. The latter certainly help give the syncopations and hemiolas of this music a steady swing, and if the performers here do not exude quite the sense of joyous freedom that their Venezuelan counterparts brought to it (I have seen Palacios conduct Fernandes's earthy *Dame albricia mano Anton* pretty much with her hips), they will still make your body move. The technical standards are also better – the two light-voiced and penetrative singers are certainly superior, if less colourful – and so too is the excellent recorded sound. **Lindsay Kemp**

'The Golden Age of Danish Partsongs'

Gade Fünf Gesänge, Op 13 – No 2, Die

Wasserrose; No 4, Im Herbst; No 5, Im Wald.

Kong Valdemars jagt **JPE Hartmann** Religious and Popular Poems, Op 86 – I varen knoppes en lind sa gron; Jeg ved, jeg vorder dig aldrig kær

Heise Natten var mild og kær **Kuhlau** Majsång. Nu løvsalen skygger **Laub** Stille, hjerte, sol går ned **C Nielsen** Jeg bærer med smil min byrde.

Min Jesus, lad mit hjerte få. Underlige aftenlufte **Nørholm** Mine danske kilder, Op 128 **S Schultz** Yndigt dufter Danmark **Traditional** Dronning Dagmars Dod (arr Gade) **Weyse** Barcarole.

Lysets Engel går med glans (arr Hillier).

Wandrers Nachtlied

Ars Nova Copenhagen / Paul Hillier

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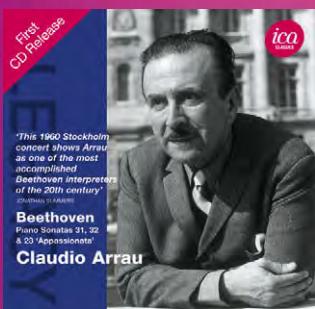
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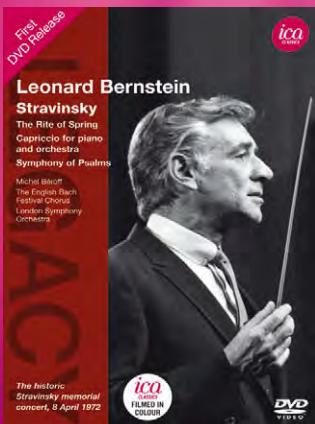
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Disc of the month

Bellini	La Sonnambula (DVD)	Durlovski, Ferro £22.00
Birtwistle	Moth Requiem, Latin Motets	Williams, Kok £12.50
Handel	Peace and Celebration	Clare College, Mortensen £12.50
Marie et Marion	Motets & Chansons	Anonymous 4 £11.50
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Schubert	Winterreise	Kaufmann, Deutsch £11.00
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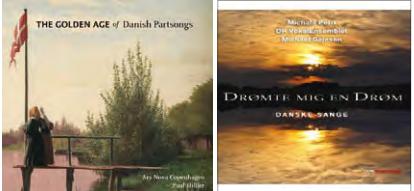
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'Drømte mig en drøm'

'Danish Songs'

Aagaard Spurven sidder stum bag kvist
B Andersen Svantes lykkelige dag **Bellmann** Nu er jord og himmel stille **Borg** Et hav, der vugger sig til ro nu **Fabricius-Bjerre** Duerne flyver
Hamburger Men det bli'r atter stille **Harder** Den blå anemone **Hjelmborg** Den fine, lyse nat
Larsen Om lidt bli'r her stille **Laub** Stille, hjerte, sol går ned **Mortensen** Septembers himmel er så blå **A Nielsen** Midsommerteltet **C Nielsen** Sæank kun dit hoved, du blomst. Solen er så rød, mor **Nissen** Aftensti. Noget om lykke **Ring** Danmark, nu blunder den lyse nat **Traditional** Det er en lørdag aften. Drømte mig en drøm i nat. Hvem kan sejle foruden vind. I skovens dybe, stille ro **Weyses** Natten er så stille
Danish National Vocal Ensemble /
Michael Bojesen with Michala Petri rec
 OUR Recordings F 8 226907 (67' • DDD • T)



Two discs here drawn from the same rich fund of Danish 'folk-like' songs for amateur consumption and with some overlap of composers, yet highly contrasted in conception and presentation.

Paul Hillier's idea is that the 'Golden Age' – a term used in Denmark to refer to the cultural richness of the first half of the 19th century – could equally well apply to the succeeding generations of song-composers, such as Carl Nielsen and Thomas Laub (long-standing friends who fiercely debated the appropriate style for such songs) and on into the late 20th-century in the work of Svend Schultz and Ib Nørholm. Under Hillier's direction, Ars Nova Copenhagen perform *a cappella*, with meticulously shaded dynamics, articulation and colour. Apart from offering rather short measure at 53 minutes (they take a pragmatic view of how many verses to include for each song), their beautifully recorded and helpfully documented programme makes a valuable document for newcomers to and aficionados of this repertoire alike.

For their more generously filled disc (66'35") the Danish National Vocal Ensemble offer plainer singing but richly decked-out arrangements, plus Michala Petri's florid descants. It seems rather pointless to debate 'authenticity' in a repertoire that is kept alive over the years as much through adaptation as by conservation. Suffice to say that if you respond well to the artier end of *Carols for Choirs*-style harmonisation, and if you like

the idea of recorder overlays, this may be just your thing. For myself I found both aspects irksome after a couple of tracks and it took me half a dozen sessions to get through the disc. Gilding the lily is the kindest image I can find for it. Booklet presentation is miserly. Composers and poets are named, but that's all.

David Fanning

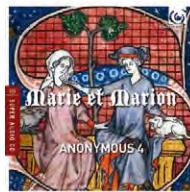
'Marie et Marion'

G

Motets and chansons from the Montpellier Codex (13th-century France)

Anonymous 4

Harmonia Mundi F HMU80 7524 (56' • DDD/DSD • T/t)



Twenty years ago, Anonymous 4 had the absurd courage to issue a disc entirely confined to motets in the 13th-century Montpellier Codex – a massive collection of almost 400 works that are almost never performed and contradict everything that is expected of great music: tiny pieces, mostly between one and two minutes in length, usually three texts running simultaneously, often in different languages and sometimes entirely irrelevant to one another, crammed into textures with the voices occupying more or less the same restricted range. But it was well received; and its lovers will be more than delighted to find they have done the same again.

This time, though, they have added four monophonic trouvère songs, to help the listener identify the four voices of these four very different singers, who make such a marvellous ensemble. And they have once again assembled the music in an interesting and intelligent programme, playing on the notion that in so much medieval song there is ambiguity as to whether the lady being praised is the Virgin Mary or the shepherdess Marion. They have also presented a lot of the pieces in 'progressive' form: first just the motetus and then the entire piece, to help the ear disentangle the details, which have sometimes been described as assembled with a positively Webernian precision.

Gorgeous music, gorgeously sung with absolute transparency. And, as we have come to expect, the booklet includes all the texts with good translations into English, modern French and German. **David Fallows**

'Prayer - Voice & Organ'

JS Bach Die guldne Sonne, BWV451. Komm, süsser Tod, BWV478. Kommt, Seelen, dieser Tag, BWV479. Mein Jesu, was für Seelenweh,

BWV487. So gibst du nun, mein Jesu, gute Nacht!, BWV501 **Bizet** Agnus Dei **Duruflé** Notre Père, Op 14 **Dvořák** Ave Maria, Op 19b B68 **Purcell** The Blessed Virgin's Expostulation, Z196 **Ravel** Deux Mélodies hébraïques – Kaddisch **Schubert** Ellens Gesang III, D839. Himmelsfunkens, D651. Der Leidende, D432. Litanei auf das Fest Allerseelen, D343. Totengräbers Heimweh, D842. Vom Mitleiden Mariä, D632 **Verdi** Ave Maria **Wolf** Mörike-Lieder – Gebet; Karwoche; Schlafendes Jesukind; Zum neuen Jahr. Spanisches Liederbuch – Mühvoll komm ich und beladen (arr Reger) **Magdalena Kožená** mez **Christian Schmitt** org DG F 479 2067GH (75' • DDD)



Mezzo-soprano Magdalena Kožená believes it is 'impossible to draw a line between the religious and the personal'. It's a philosophy shared by composers throughout the 19th century, whose music moved freely from church to home and concert hall. 'Prayer' stretches this idea into a programme of sacred song for voice and organ that encompasses Lieder by Schubert and Wolf, Bach chorales, songs by Ravel and Purcell, and church music by Duruflé, Dvořák and Verdi.

Kožená's is a broad musical church, but vocally (and with the aid of organist Christian Schmitt's elegant transcriptions) she makes it work. While concert-hall appearances recently have revealed some issues – a thinness to her vocal tone, a certain raggedness at the top of her range – back in the studio Kožená is on solid ground. Her Wolf is particularly luscious – never overworked but always emotionally direct, establishing the same flexible intimacy with the organ that we'd expect with a piano. Her covered middle and lower registers dissolve delicately into cloudy organ registrations, a musical *coup de théâtre* that also works well in Duruflé's *Notre Père*.

Adapting less naturally to its new world, Bizet's *Agnus Dei* (a posthumous arrangement performed at the composer's funeral) feels a little polite, lacking the spiritual bombast the music craves. And at the other extreme, Purcell's *The Blessed Virgin's Expostulation* isn't quite as light on its feet as it needs to be if it is to keep up with the composer's mercurial mood-swings.

But these are quibbles. Kožená sings superbly here, proving herself as flexible stylistically as vocally.

Alexandra Coghlan

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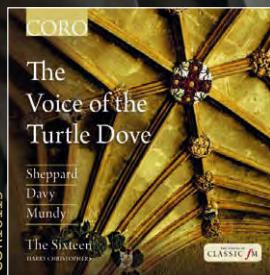
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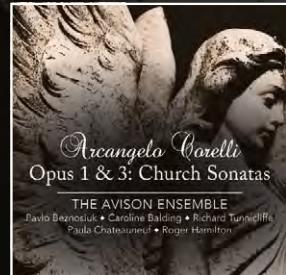
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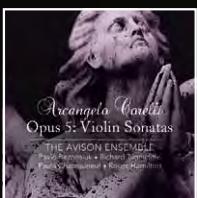
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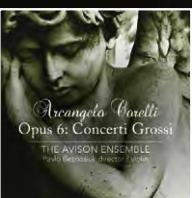
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GRAMOPHONE Focus

RACHMANINOV'S SONGS

Geoffrey Norris listens to a complete recording of Rachmaninov's songs, from seven singers accompanied by Iain Burnside



Warming Rachmaninov: Evelina Dobraceva records Rachmaninov at the Queen's Hall, Edinburgh

It is worth taking note of the people to whom Rachmaninov dedicated his songs. There are friends and relatives; there is a childhood sweetheart; there is his future wife together with at least one mistress; and there are singers. One of the Op 8 songs, 'Molitva' ('A Prayer', 1893), was written for the dramatic soprano Mariya Deysha-Sionitskaya, presumably as a thank-you for having sung the role of Zemfira in the Bolshoi Theatre premiere of *Aleko* in the spring of that year. Among the Op 14 songs, two from 1896 are dedicated to Elizaveta Lavrovskaya, the mezzo who first put the idea of *Eugene Onegin* into Tchaikovsky's head. In Op 21 (1900, 1902) we find the names of Chaliapin and the lyric soprano Nadezhda Vrubel. Chaliapin reappears in the Op 34 set (1912) along with the tenor Leonid Slobodkin, the meaty-role soprano Félia Litvinne and, in the famous *Vocalise*, the coloratura of Antonina Nezhdanova. Then all six of the Op 38 songs (1916) were composed for the rich, malleable soprano of Nina Koshetz, with whom Rachmaninov almost certainly enjoyed more than merely an artistic understanding.

Bearing in mind that Rachmaninov had such a varied spectrum of vocal talent within his orbit and his imagination, it is all the more appropriate that the songs should

'This set gives a much fuller idea of the vocal diversity Rachmaninov had in mind'

be sung, as on this first-rate three-disc set, by voices in the ranges and of the temperaments and timbres for which they were intended. Chandos, in its three-volume set of the 1990s, spreads the songs across four voices – soprano, contralto, tenor and bass-baritone. An earlier Decca set assigned them all to the soprano Elisabeth Söderström, which in a number of respects had its limitations. This new set deploys seven singers – the sopranos Evelina Dobraceva and Ekaterina Siurina, the mezzo Justina Gringyte, tenor Daniil Shtoda, baritones Andrei Bondarenko and Rodion Pogossov and the bass Alexander Vinogradov – and in so doing gives a much fuller idea of the vocal diversity and specificity that Rachmaninov had in mind. That said, only two of the songs dedicated to Slobodkin in Op 34 are actually sung by the tenor here: the rest are taken by female voices.

If quantity is an issue, the Chandos set is more complete than this new one, which nevertheless covers all 71 of the published songs with opus numbers. There are two extras: the musical letter that Rachmaninov wrote in October 1908 to Konstantin Stanislavsky, and

the witty 'Ikalos li tebe, Natasha?' ('Were you hiccupping, Natasha?') that he composed in 1899 while his creative gifts were otherwise dormant, prefacing the song with the comment, 'No! My muse has not died, dear Natasha [Natalya Satina, his wife-to-be]. I dedicate my new song to you!' The Chandos discs also include the early, posthumously published songs together with a couple of later, stand-alone items, but there are distinct pluses to this new Delphian set. One of them is unquestionably the pianism of Iain Burnside, who recognises the integral expressive role of the piano in these songs. This can range from the flood of notes in 'Vesenniye vody' ('Spring Waters'), Op 14 No 11, to the intimate way in which the piano twines with the voice in 'Zdes khorosho' ('How peaceful'), Op 21 No 7, exquisitely sung by Siurina with a perfectly placed top B. Burnside has full measure of drama and subtlety throughout this programme.

Siurina is also assigned the six Koshetz songs, Op 38, a set that shows how far Rachmaninov had come stylistically since the echoes of Tchaikovsky in his earliest songs, and she sings them strongly but with lovely mystic touches that point to the poetry's alliances with Symbolism. Just how her timbre contrasts with that of her colleagues can be appreciated in Op 21, where her 'Zdes khorosho' is followed by Gringyte's glinting, passionate mezzo in 'Na smert chizhika' ('On the Death of a Songbird', No 8) and Dobraceva's warmth in 'Melodiya' ('Melody', No 9). The men, too, excel in matters of characterisation and tonal colour, Vinogradov, Bondarenko and Pogossov perfectly suited in their different ways to the Chaliapin-inspired 'Sudba' ('Fate'), Op 21 No 1, 'Voskresheniye Lazarya' ('The Raising of Lazarus'), Op 34 No 6, and 'Ty znal evo' ('You knew him'), Op 34 No 9. Shtoda can match soaring lyricism with the melancholy of 'Noch pechalna' ('Night is Sorrowful'), Op 26 No 12, though, contrary to the booklet listing, he does not sing the preceding song, 'Fontan' ('The Fountain'): Siurina does. Practically everything, however, rings true in this set, sung gloriously with palpable heart and soul. **G**



THE RECORDING

Rachmaninov Songs
Various Singers / Iain Burnside pf
Delphian M ③ DCD34127

REISSUES

James Jolly on a Giulini trio and Philip Clark on a Bachfest

Carlo Maria Giulini at 100

Three variable boxes from the great Italian conductor's EMI legacy



Two of the greatest concerts of my life were given by the Los Angeles Philharmonic under Carlo Maria Giulini in 1980 at the Royal Festival Hall: the highlights were Beethoven's *Eroica* and Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* (both subsequently recorded for DG; both shattering!). It's now the centenary – hard to believe – of Giulini's birth (he died in 2005), and Warner Classics (drawing on its EMI archive) has issued three sets to mark the occasion. They're rather funereally packaged in very stark black – ironic, as the music-making is characterised by a remarkable range of colours.

Giulini's non-operatic career is spread over a number of labels: DG covered the Los Angeles and some of the Chicago period; Sony Classical has the late recordings; but EMI/Warner has an eclectic selection that embraces Giulini's 'London Years' (with the Philharmonia and New Philharmonia orchestras, the LPO and the LSO; mainly confined to the late 1950s and 1960s, with three recordings from 1972 and 1976, and making up a 17-CD set), his 'Chicago Years' (four CDs) and his 'Concerto Recordings' from 1955 to 1980 (nine CDs).

The most 'focused' of the three sets is **The Chicago Years** (a straight reissue of a set from 2004), simply because it covers a much tighter period and mostly comprises

large-scale works. Giulini served as the Chicago SO's principal guest conductor between 1969 and 1972, continuing to work with them until taking up his music director role with the LAPO. The set contains a Brahms Fourth recorded in 1969 – it was a work Giulini conducted more than any other during his career (apparently more than 180 times). The adjective that perhaps best describes this performance is 'affectionate'. Giulini lavishes it with enormous attention to detail and phrasing, and the CSO play magnificently (the woodwind-playing is glorious). I love this reading – and I'm in good company as, apparently, so does Sir Simon Rattle.

Mahler's First (1971) is rather noble – low on heart-on-sleeve emotion but, inevitably, beautifully shaped and architecturally faultless (very much in the Bruno Walter mould). Just as Giulini conducted only two Mahlers (Nos 1 and 9), he focused his attention in Bruckner on Nos 7-9 (as well as, slightly strangely, No 2). His Chicago Bruckner Ninth is rather a disappointment; as Robert Layton put it in February 1978, 'There is no lack of power or grandeur, and predictably Giulini expends enormous care over detail, fashioning each phrase with care and thought. Indeed, perhaps it is this very thought that lies at the heart of the trouble, for in some way the sheer mystery of this noble score seems to elude

him even if he uncovers much beauty of detail.' His greatest Bruckner-conducting was still to come. A Beethoven Seventh (1971) is superb – strong, rhythmically vital and large in scale. A Berlioz *Romeo and Juliet* and Stravinsky's *Firebird* and *Petrushka* suites are gloriously coloured and vividly characterised.

The London Years, at 17 CDs, is inevitably more wide-ranging both in repertoire and time. At its heart there is a Philharmonia/New Philharmonia Brahms 'cycle' (not recorded as such, as Nos 1-3 were taped in 1961-62, with No 4 following in 1968). Like the Chicago No 4 and Giulini's many other Brahms discs, these are beautifully shaped, often quite slow (the first movement of No 1 is, for example, slower than Klemperer), and wonderfully well recorded. Beautiful sound (both in orchestral terms and engineering) characterises Giulini's discs of French and Spanish music – Debussy's *La mer* and *Nocturnes*; Ravel's *Miroirs*, *Daphnis et Chloé* Suite No 2, *Mother Goose Suite*, *Pavane pour une infante défunte* and *Rapsodie espagnole*; and Falla's *El Amor brujo* (with Victoria de los Angeles) and *The Three-Cornered Hat*. Many of these are classics and stand up to the test of time very well (engineers Douglas Larter and Robert Gooch were invariably in charge).

Of the Russian fare, there's a lovely Tchaikovsky Second and a powerful *Pathétique* (resigned rather than self-pitying, and drawing the emotion out of the music rather than laying it over the surface). There are three Beethoven symphonies: Nos 6 (affectionate and lyrical), 8 (rather heavy on its feet) and 9 (a large-scale reading that builds inexorably to the finale); it's a shame that Giulini's EMI discs of the two Beethoven Masses have been omitted. Other core symphonies here – all with the Philharmonia – are Haydn's *Surprise* (1956), Schubert's *Unfinished* (1961), Schumann's Third (1958) and Franck's Symphony (1957 – lyrical and considerably swifter than Giulini's two later and successively more sluggish BPO and VPO versions, but the recording does show its age). Dvořák's Nos 7-9 are all lovingly unfolded, though No 8 needs a bit more momentum; No 7, with the LPO, sounds like it was the one Giulini loved the most (in contrast with the *Scherzo capriccioso*, which is really rather dull). The set also contains Giulini's classic Rossini overture collection (1959-64): it just sparkles. Disc 17 is a documentary by Jon Tolansky, made for Chicago's WFMT radio, and features a conversation with Giulini recorded in Milan in 2003 – it's an interesting extra, though Tolansky's reverential approach may not be to everyone's taste.

The third volume is **The Concerto Recordings** and contains some interesting collaborations, though none that really grabs the imagination: János Starker in cello concertos by Boccherini, Haydn (No 2), Schumann and Saint-Saëns (No 1) using quite a lot more *rubato* than you'd probably encounter today; Claudio Arrau in the two Brahms piano concertos (I wonder whether Giulini was temperamentally suited to these works – they both lack fire and it's left to Arrau to ratchet up the tension); Milstein in Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No 1 (beautiful but slightly lacking in variety), Rostropovich in the

Dvořák (amazingly somnolent!) and Saint-Saëns's No 1, and Itzhak Perlman in Brahms and Beethoven (the latter a *Gramophone* Award winner in 1981, though I find them both a little lacking in 'struggle' for my taste, but they're undeniably fine and beautifully played). Alexis Weissenberg offers an alternative Brahms First Piano Concerto (LSO, 1972) – but if you really want *this* soloist in *this* repertoire, track down his EMI disc with Muti and the Philadelphia Orchestra. Two Mozart piano concertos (K271 and K467) are really rather good and Weissenberg's cadenzas in K467 are imaginative and stylish though

the actual piano sound is a bit 'pingy'. The Vivaldi *Four Seasons* from 1955 with Manoug Parikian is one of the work's first recordings – it's sensitively done but is surely no more than a curiosity these days. All in all, something of a curate's egg. The Chicago set is the one to go for.

THE RECORDINGS

'Giulini: The Chicago Years'

Warner Classics (S) (4) 431752-2

'Giulini: The London Years'

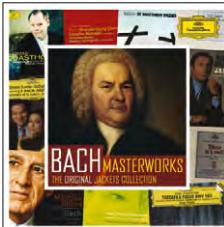
Warner Classics (S) (17) 993739-2

'Giulini: The Concerto Recordings'

Warner Classics (S) (9) 431761-2

Bach by all and sundry

A cornucopian collection from interpreters of all kinds



Any critique emanating from the general direction of John Eliot Gardiner stings more than most because his words, clearly, are not those of some partisan critic or aloof academic. When Gardiner makes the startling assertion – just a few pages into his recently published biography of JS Bach, *Music in the Castle of Heaven* (Allen Lane: 2013; 11/13) – that hearing Karl Richter conduct the Bach motets live in 1967 was an experience marred by 'oppressive volume and sheer aggression', you take note. Especially when he adds the rider that the following day the old-school German conductor/harpsichordist did precisely nothing to redeem himself with a *Goldberg Variations* played on a 'souped-up' harpsichord: the performance, declares Gardiner, was 'thunderous'.

And so I suppressed a snigger when, a few weeks after I'd finished Gardiner's book, this 50-CD box-set showed up in the post, and – paradox waltzing with irony – I found Richter's 1961 recording of the B minor Mass sandwiched between Gardiner's 1980s *St John Passion* and *Christmas Oratorio*, and that a selection of cantatas again juxtaposed performances by Richter and Gardiner – a generational divide to be mapped and savoured, the wayback certainties of Richter, Hanns-Martin Schneidt and Helmut Walcha versus the avant-Baroque of Gardiner, Trevor Pinnock, Christopher Hogwood and Reinhard Goebel.

For visceral sonic might, no one could fail to be exhilarated by Richter's B minor Mass. Brucknerian excesses of brass and thunderous (that word again) timpani belong, of course, to another era, as does Richter's predilection for detached, slightly robotic phrasing. But tempi, generally, are not as monumental and stately as you might be anticipating – the mammoth opening *Kyrie* (12'15" to Gardiner's 9'28") being the major exception. No, the interpretative dividing line between Richter and Gardiner fractures over issues of tone and weight. Gardiner looks back to move forwards, his base orchestral/choral sound – streamlined, agile, skipping – removing Bach from being recalibrated as a stylistic stablemate of, say, Mozart's Requiem or Beethoven's *Missa solemnis*.

Claudio Abbado's complete *Brandenburg Concertos* with Orchestra Mozart, a live recording from 2007, again raises points of order about appropriateness of ensemble. As Lindsay Kemp pointed out in his review of the original release on DVD, Abbado's hybrid ensemble of modern and period instruments produces a performance 'infused with a musical sensitivity that is ever-present yet refuses to draw attention to itself'. Contrapuntal lines are neatly landscaped and the ensemble glistens. But there's a but – John Butt and his Dunedin Consort, and the white heat of their 2013 *Brandenburgs* (Linn, A/13), which leaves Abbado perched on the wrong side of bland. The Second Concerto makes the point most clearly. Butt's exultantly raggedy ensemble – lines tumbling far and wide as David Blackadder's Satchmo trumpet cuts across

the contrapuntal strata – busts through the idea of an orderly frame, an idea which Abbado considers desirable and successfully implements.

Elsewhere, Pierre-Laurent Aimard's *The Art of Fugue* and Maurizio Pollini's Book 1 of *The Well-Tempered Clavier* are unapologetically performed on pianos more suitable to project Brahms or Rachmaninov, while at the other end of the ideological spectrum Pinnock and Kenneth Gilbert work with period harpsichords. The pacy tempi and delicately revealing registrations of Pinnock's 1980 *Goldberg Variations* (played on a 1646 Ruckers harpsichord – not that you'd know it from DG's penny-pinching booklet) is game-changing stuff, and Pinnock becomes a mainstay of the box. Partitas, orchestral suites and concertos for harpsichord and strings fall under his bailiwick; and you wish, frankly, that DG had included his takes on the violin concertos, thereby ousting Hilary Hahn's 2003 disc with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra under Jeffrey Kahane, which manages to be both prim and flashy.

Via generous slabs of organ music (Richter, Walcha and Simon Preston) and Nathan Milstein's fine two-disc Solo Violin Sonatas and Partitas, the set actually ends with Aimard's intellectually fortifying *Art of Fugue*; but the emotional end point is Reinhard Goebel and Musica Antiqua Köln's *Musical Offering* – falling forever deeper into Bach's cabalistic harmonic sleights of hand. ☺

THE RECORDING

Bach Masterworks - Original Jackets Collection
Various artists DG (S) (50 discs) 479 1043

Opera



Richard Lawrence on a revival of Wagner's Iphigenia arrangement:

'Spering makes an excellent case for this version, with lively singing and equally vigorous playing' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 91**



David Patrick Stearns opens two big Strauss opera boxes:

'Warner's *Frau* reveals a trend: casting away from hardcore Wagnerians towards the cleaner-voiced' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 95**

Bellini



La sonnambula

Luciano Botelho ten.....Elvino
Ana Durlovski sop.....Amina
Enzo Capuano bass.....Count Rodolfo
Catriona Smith sop.....Lisa
Helene Schneiderman mez.....Teresa
Motti Kastón bar.....Alessio
Stuttgart State Opera Chorus; Stuttgart State Orchestra / Gabriele Ferro

Stage directors Jossi Wieler and Sergio Morabito

Video director Marcus Richardt

EuroArts (F) DVD 205 9338; (F) BD 205 9334
(156' • NTSC • 16.9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA5.1, DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • S/S)
Recorded live, June 2013



By one of those coincidences surely resulting from a conference held to avoid such clashes, another modern version of Bellini's psychological opera comes to the small screen a mere month after the one recommended in our March issue. Frustratingly, it is on balance even better than that La Fenice one.

This Stuttgart production by the experienced Wieler/Morabito team is also lightly modernised in period – although the setting by Anna Viebrock (in one of her classically detailed shabby interiors with an occasional distant glimpse of a lake) makes the work feel much less romantic than does the Venetian staging. There Bepi Morassi, despite his modern setting, clung to at least the physical illusion of Bellini and Romani's ballet-influenced geography and psychology. The Stuttgart team, on the other hand, bluntly portray Amina's sleepwalking as a mental problem, do not shrink from actually showing the historical phantom mentioned in the libretto (nor her presumed connection with the returning Count Rodolfo) and strongly question the happy ending suggested by music and text. It's a more directed, more interventionist staging than the Italian one.

Musically we are again in the safe but far from unexciting hands of Gabriele Ferro. Also far from unexciting is the thrilling singing of Macedonian soprano Ana Durlovski, recently seen on DVD as the Queen of the Night in new *Magic Flutes* from Bregenz and Berlin. As well as fielding a Caruso/Björling-like ability to *crescendo* on those high peaks, Durlovski is a terrific natural actress in conveying Amina's emotional plight. Her interpretation here has already won the German Theatre 'Der Faust' prize. She is especially well partnered by Enzo Capuano's Count and Catriona Smith's well-contrasted, blowsy Lisa. Luciano Botelho's Elvino certainly sings well enough but this is just not a production which focuses on his relationship with Amina. You could argue that's a distortion but the opera's drama and music can certainly take it. Filming and sound recording are both top-class. The choice is clear: for more romantic naturalism, stay with Venice; for a darker ride go to Stuttgart. **Mike Ashman**

Selected comparison:

Fenice, Ferro (3/14) (CMA) DVD 713908; BD 714004

Caccini

Euridice

Silvia Frigato sop.....Euridice/La Tragedia
Furio Zanasi bar.....Orfeo
Gianpaolo Fagotto ten.....Arcetro
Luca Dordolo ten.....Tirsì/Aminta
Sara Mingardo contr.....Dafne/Proserpina
Monica Piccinini sop.....Venere
Antonio Abete bass.....Plutone
Matteo Bellotto bass.....Radamanto
Mauro Borgioni bar.....Caronte

Concerto Italiano / Rinaldo Alessandrini

Naïve (F) OP30552 (79' • DDD • T/t)

Recorded live at the Innsbruck Festival of Early Music, August 2013



The birth of opera can be traced back to a few significant landmark events in Florence,

such as Giulio Caccini's *Euridice*.

Ottavio Rinuccini's libretto had already been set to music by Jacopo Peri for the entertainments that celebrated the marriage of Maria de' Medici to Henry IV of France in October 1600, although the actual performance featured interpolated airs and choruses by Caccini (and were sung by his pupils). Thereafter, local rivals Caccini and Peri scrambled to claim pre-eminence by trying to get their own independent settings of *Euridice* published first; Caccini won the race when his score appeared in January 1601, just a few weeks before Peri's score was printed. However, Caccini's setting was not actually heard until a performance at the Palazzo Pitti on December 5, 1602, and its reception was overshadowed by the prior success of Peri's version. Nonetheless, Caccini's score is certainly the outright winner when it comes to the 21st-century discography; Scherzi Musicali's landmark recording is now followed by Concerto Italiano's live version recorded at last summer's Innsbruck Early Music Festival.

Silvia Frigato's contributions are sweetly endearing (*Euridice* doesn't actually do much but Frigato also sings *La Tragedia*'s short prologue). However, Furio Zanasi's ardent *Orfeo* is not a convincing proponent of the 'sweet notes and such melodious strains' of which Plutone accuses him; the smoky and forthright delivery of the grieving hero's desperate song in the underworld does not seem beguiling enough to be considered Orphic in quality (although his declamation of poetry is never less than vivid). Gianpaolo Fagotto bellows through *Arcetro*'s numerous lines using velocity rather than the poetry. Most other experienced singers are highly effective in their brief solo monodies and in a few quasi-madrigalian choruses (usually refrains that are reiterated during scenes). Alessandrini and his continuo colleagues ensure the drama zips along at an intensive pace, although

the battery of full-frontal plucking wears thin after a while. Softer seductiveness might help Caccini's value to emerge more engagingly.

David Vickers

Selected comparison:

Scherzi Musicali, Achten (3/09) (RICE) RIC269

Glass

Galileo Galilei

Richard Troxell ten Older Galileo

Lindsay Ohse sop. Maria Celeste/Duchess Christina

André Chiang bar Younger Galileo/Salviati

Nicholas Nelson bass-bar Pope Urban VIII/Simplicio/Cardinal Barberini

John Holiday counterten Cardinal I/Oracle I

Matthew Hayward bar. Cardinal II/Servant/Oracle II

José Rubio bar Cardinal III/Priest

Anne McKee Reed sop Sagredo/Marie de' Medicis/Eos

Caitlin Mathes mez A Scribe/Maria Maddalena

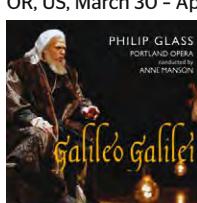
Portland Opera Orchestra / Anne Manson

Orange Mountain Music ® OMM0091

(87' • DDD • S/T)

Recorded live at the Newmark Theater, Portland,

OR, US, March 30 - April 7, 2012



Successful revivals during the past few years of Glass's first two operas, *Einstein on the Beach* and *Satyagraha*, have diverted attention away from the composer's more recent works in this genre. Portland Opera has done much to redress the imbalance, staging Glass's *Orpheé* in 2009 and *Galileo Galilei* in 2012, from whose production this recording is made.

As suggested by its title, *Galileo Galilei* (2002) is based on the life of the famous 17th-century scientist and mathematician, and is very much in keeping with the 'portrait opera' aesthetic that Glass has developed from *Einstein* onwards. Such is the centrality of Galileo that he is given two distinct characters: old and young 'portraits' presented across the opera's vast one-act structure. Curiously, the opera starts with old, infirm Galileo, blind and beleaguered by endless conflicts with the Catholic Church, rewinds to young Galileo's boundless energy and thirst for scientific discovery, before ending in the final scene with Galileo-as-child, witnessing the birth of opera with his father – the musician and theorist Vincenzo Galilei.

This back-to-front arrangement has the advantage of delivering a neat and decisive ending but it does rather take the sting out of the tale. After scene 5, which covers Galileo's 'Dialogue Concerning the Two

Chief Systems of the World' – the publication that landed him in most trouble with the Vatican's authorities – there's really very little for the opera to add by way of 'story', other than to regale the audience with Galileo's many inventions and innovations. There's plenty of drama and intensity in the first half, however, such as the powerful second scene, where Galileo is forced to recant his 'philosophically corrupt opinions' in front of the Roman inquisition to the accompaniment of pounding bass, threatening brass and clanging bells.

As might be expected from an opera whose main thesis revolves around Galileo's theory that 'the Sun is at the centre of the world and does not move, and the Earth is not the centre of the world and moves', Glass's looping, circling, pulsing patterns and cycles act as appropriate musical metaphors, and the ending's return to the uneasy oscillations of the opening scene acts as a stark reminder of man's inability to learn from his mistakes. But maybe Glass's mistake is to repeat too much from his own musical past here. The work lacks the element of surprise, although Portland Opera under Anne Manson deliver a satisfactory performance overall.

Pwyll ap Siôn

Gluck

Iphigenia in Aulis (arr Wagner)

Camilla Nylund sop Iphigenia

Oliver Zwarg bass-bar Agamemnon

Michelle Breedt mez Clytemnestra

Christian Elsner ten Achilles

Richard Logiewa bar Patroklos

Raimund Nolte bass-bar Kalchas

Thilo Dahlmann bass-bar Arcas

Mirjam Engel sop Artemis

Chorus Musicae Köln; Das Neue Orchester /

Christoph Spering

Oehms ® OC953 (114' • DDD • T)



Iphigénie en Aulide was the first opera that Gluck wrote for Paris, where it was staged in

1774. It's not done much these days, though Glyndebourne did perform it in 2002 and there are good recordings: from John Eliot Gardiner (Erato, 6/90) and a DVD from Amsterdam in a production by Pierre Audi conducted by Marc Minkowski, where it's coupled with the better-known *Iphigénie en Tauride* (Opus Arte, 5/13).

The Greek fleet, ready to depart for Troy, is becalmed at Aulis. Through Calchas, the high priest, the goddess Diana has required king Agamemnon to sacrifice

his daughter Iphigenia. Appalled, Agamemnon tries but fails to prevent the arrival of Iphigenia who, accompanied by her mother Clytemnestra, is on her way to Aulis in order to marry Achilles. At the moment of sacrifice Diana herself intervenes, moved by Iphigenia's courage and Clytemnestra's despair: the lovers are united and the fleet sets sail.

During the 1840s Wagner was a Kapellmeister at the court of the King of Saxony in Dresden. His first assignment was to conduct Gluck's *Armide*, the success of which encouraged him to make an adaptation of *Iphigénie en Aulide*. This was performed in 1847, with his brother's adopted daughter Johanna as Iphigenia and Wilhelmine Schröder-Devrient as Clytemnestra; both had appeared in the first performance of *Tannhäuser* and the latter had created the part of Senta in *Der fliegende Holländer*.

In the booklet-note to his recording, Gardiner refers to Wagner's 'deplorable, inflated version', but that is nonsense.

Gluck's scoring comprises double woodwind (including clarinets, but they are seldom deployed), pairs of horns and trumpets, timpani and strings. Wagner adds two horns, a trumpet and three trombones plus, for the denouement, extra wind, trumpets and percussion. The brass is used mainly to add weight to the choruses; the recitatives and other passages for strings alone are, by and large, left untouched. A couple of airs and most of the dances are omitted. Wagner's principal contributions are short introductions, links and postludes. His one significant rewrite comes at the end, where he makes Diana/Artemis spirit Iphigenia away to serve her as a priestess in 'a distant land' (Tauris, presumably).

Christoph Spering makes an excellent case for this version, with lively singing from the chorus and equally vigorous playing, the brass splendidly prominent. The male soloists are disappointing, Oliver Zwarg and Christian Elsner both sounding strained. But Michelle Breedt powerfully expresses Clytemnestra's agony and Camilla Nylund is an ideal Iphigenia: angry, dignified, resigned. The booklet contains the libretto, but only in German.

Richard Lawrence

E Hughes

When the Flame Dies

Edward Grint bar Poet

Lucy Williams mez Princess Death

Julian Podger ten Orpheus

Emily Phillips sop Eurydice

Andrew Radley counterten Raymond

New Music Players / Carlos del Cueto

Video director Simon Weir

Métier (CD + DVD) MSV77203

(57' + 3' • DDD • PAL/NTSC • 5.1 & stereo • 0 • S/T)

Recorded live at Canterbury Christchurch

University, October 17, 2012

DVD extra: 'The symptoms of his madness were as follows' – a film by Sheryl Jenkins



Beware: this opera may take you hostage with its ability to get under your skin and its willingness to use any technological means to do so. Besides having a typical CD recording, a separate DVD of a live performance has both PAL and NTSC on opposite sides of the disc. Loosely based on Jean Cocteau's history of heartbreak, opium addiction and impaired creativity, Hughes's Poet protagonist is faced with a choice between creating great works of art or, like Orpheus (a significant character here), bringing his deceased love back from the dead. In the cold light of reality, this premise is a straw man – why does one preclude the other? – but, as with any good opera, this one convincingly creates its own logic.

Into the Poet's grief-stricken world comes the mysterious Princess Death, who is bent on breaking through his Byronic postures with accusations that he secretly wished the death of his male partner Raymond. Roger Morris's libretto gains much of its entrancing quality through the leeway of ambiguity plus provocative discussions about the moral implications of bringing people back to life.

Musically, Hughes's compositional manner grabs from many of the same musical zones that Thomas Adès draws upon for his tough-to-categorise manner – freely veering between vague key centres and complete atonality. The 12-member Pierrot-ish ensemble reveals much effective compositional strategy, with motivic repetition, naggingly obsessive long-held notes in the winds and just plain alchemy. Purely electronic interludes are full of oblique commentary, though sometimes with gurgling effects and sci-fi *glissandos* that seem a bit dated. Most effective are live/electronic fusion effects in some of the more other-worldly passages.

The question is not if you like it but if you can tear yourself away from it. I was in the latter camp, especially in the video, despite cheesy computer graphics superimposed over the concert performance at hand. The singing is somewhat uneven: though the cast know

their music thoroughly, the only voice I'd hunt down in the future is that of mezzo-soprano Lucy Williams. The short, inconsequential companion film titled *The symptoms of his madness were as follows* by Sheryl Jenkins tells a story separate from the opera, with lots of messy handwriting and music taken from Hughes's Chamber Concerto. It can be skipped.

David Patrick Stearns

Mussorgsky**Boris Godunov** (1868/69 version)

Alexander Tsybalyuk bass Boris Godunov
 Sergey Skorokhodov ten Grigory
 Anatoli Kotscherga bass Pimen
 Vladimir Matorin bass Varlaam
 Gerhard Siegel ten Shuisky
 Ulrich Ress ten Missail
 Yulia Sokolik sop Feodor
 Eri Nakamura sop Xenia
 Heike Grötzingen mez Nurse
 Okka von der Damerau mez Hostess
 Kevin Conners ten Simpleton
 Markus Eiche bar Shchelkalov
 Dean Power ten Boyar
 Tareq Nazmi bass Mityucha
 Christian Rieger bar Captain
Chorus of the Bavarian State Opera; Bavarian State Orchestra / Kent Nagano
 Stage director Calixto Bieito
 Video director Andy Sommer
 Bel Air Classiques (CD + DVD) BAC102; (Blu-ray) BAC402
 (139' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA5.1, DD5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • S/S)
 Recorded live, February 2013



The decision by opera companies to stage Mussorgsky's original 1868/69 version of

Boris Godunov is sometimes dismissed as economic expedience masquerading as musicological concern for the composer's first thoughts. Calixto Bieito's Munich production – filmed at the Bayerische Staatsoper at the beginning of last year – matches the fierce concentration of Mussorgsky's seven-scene score so well that any complaints are immediately silenced. (Two other recent DVD releases, from Turin and Barcelona, opt for slightly different versions, but neither of them contains the 'Polish' act added for the 1872 revision either.)

The Catalan director is often branded a mere operatic *enfant terrible*, with certain provocative details distracting from a trademark ability to extract fine acting from singers and a knack for telling a story in an interesting and challenging way. And this is essentially what we have here. There's a

mischievous, satirical touch, with the crowd in the opening scene raising placards adorned with smug, smiling faces of political leaders, and Tareq Nazmi's Mityucha is a brilliantly convincing modern anarchist, brutally beaten by helmeted riot police.

But the updating seems neither modish nor forced, and is carried out with economy and intelligence, and brilliant attention to detail (the scene on the Lithuanian border is particularly good, and Vladimir Matorin's drunk tramp Varlaam a marvellous, darkly comic creation). The intensity of Boris's own breakdown is heightened, too, by the fact that Alexander Tsybalyuk's young-looking tsar is presented as a politician polished by spin and photo-ops. The ambiguous tragedy of Boris's death is accompanied by the casual murder of all those around him. It's powerful, brilliantly theatrical stuff, helped by Rebecca Ringst's clever revolving set, Michael Bauer's atmospheric lighting and Ingo Krügler's brilliantly observed costume designs.

There's no dip in commitment anywhere in the cast. Tsybalyuk's Boris, sung in a pleasingly smooth, well-regulated bass, is excellent, as is Anatoli Kotscherga's worldly Pimen. Gerhard Siegel is a vividly Machiavellian Shuisky, Markus Eiche a ruthless Shchelkalov and Okka von der Damerau a wonderfully slatternly Hostess.

Kent Nagano achieves thrillingly focused results from the orchestra and extended chorus, and the sound quality and video direction are impeccable. Highly recommended. Hugo Shirley

Offenbach**Les contes d'Hoffmann**

Michael Spyres ten Hoffmann
 Kathleen Kim sop Olympia
 Tatiana Pavlovskaya sop Giulietta
 Natalie Dessay sop Antonia
 Michèle Losier mez Nicklausse/Muse
 Laurent Naouri bass-bar Lindorf/Coppélus/Docteur Miracle/Dapertutto
 Manel Esteve Madrid bar Spalanzani
 Isaac Galán bar Hermann/Schlémil
 Carlos Chausson bass-bar Crespel
 Salomé Haller sop Voice of Antonia's Mother
 Francisco Vas ten Andrès/Cochenille/Frantz/Pitichinaccio
 Àlex Sanmartí bar Luther
 Airam Hernández ten Nathanaël
 Susana Cordón sop Stella
Chorus and Symphony Orchestra of the Gran Teatre del Liceu, Barcelona / Stéphane Denève
 Stage director Laurent Pelly
 Video director Louise Narboni
 Erato (CD + DVD) 2564 63691-4
 (183' • NTSC • 16:9 • DD5.1 & PCM stereo • S)



Calixto Bieito's Munich production brings a mischievous, satirical and theatrical touch to Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*



The Tales of Hoffmann, an *opéra fantastique*, was premiered at the Opéra-Comique in February 1881. Offenbach had been

working on it for several years but he didn't live to see it performed. It was completed by Ernest Guiraud, he who composed the recitatives for *Carmen* after Bizet's death; since then it has been subjected to various tinkering, including changing the order of the acts and adding material from elsewhere.

The opera begins with Hoffmann in a tavern, recalling his doomed passion for a mechanical doll, a mortally ill singer and a courtesan, all three of them embodied in his current lover. At the end he is consoled and encouraged by his muse, in the shape of his friend Nicklausse. This production is based on a modern edition which presumably sought to recreate the original draft: so there's no 'Scintille, diamant' for Dapertutto, and spoken dialogue has been restored (no information on the 'new libretto version', though). The four villains are correctly taken by one

singer, as are the four servants. That the soprano roles are allocated to different performers is understandable enough, as the voice-types are so different: Natalie Dessay and her alternate, Eglise Gutiérrez, both backed away from the challenge.

Laurent Pelly's production, unobtrusively filmed by Louise Narboni, is straightforward: no gimmicks, simple sets by Chantal Thomas, late-19th-century costumes credited to Pelly and Jean-Jacques Delmotte. The women are all good. Kathleen Kim is so convincing as Olympia the doll, with her jerky movements, that you wonder how Hoffmann and her audience could possibly be deceived. Dessay, with rather too much vibrato, is Antonia, heart-rendingly well acted; and Tatiana Pavlovskaya makes a suitably sultry, heartless Giulietta. Michèle Losier brings a surprisingly rich mezzo to the trouser role of Niklausse. If Michael Spyres doesn't have quite enough heft, his portrayal of the title-role, dishevelled or elegant, carries conviction. Laurent Naouri is outstanding as the villains.

Stéphane Denève whips up the excitement where required; a pity

that the offstage voice of Antonia's mother is hard to hear in the trio. John Schlesinger's superlative Covent Garden production is a different animal: corrupt edition, terrific cast led by Plácido Domingo. **Richard Lawrence**
Selected comparison:

Royal Op, Prêtre (12/97^R, 12/03) (WARN) 0630 19392-2

Verdi

Aida - Ritorna vincitor! **Don Carlo** - Non pianger, mia compagna; Tu che la vanità. **La forza del destino** - Pace, pace mio Dio!. **Giovanna d'Arco** - O fatidica foresta. **Un ballo in maschera** - Morrò, ma prima in grazia. **Luisa Miller** - Tu puniscimi, o Signore... A brani, a brani, o perfido. **Otello** - Mia madre aveva... Piangea cantando... Ave Maria. **La traviata** - Teneste la promessa... Addio, del passato. **Il trovatore** - D'amor sull'ali rose; Tacea la notte; Vanne, lasciami **Krassimira Stoyanova** sop **Munich Radio Orchestra / Pavel Baleff** **Orfeo** (F) C885 141A (74' • DDD)



Miss Stoyanova has made good records. 'I palpiti d'amor' and 'Slavic Opera Arias'

(also in Munich for *Orfeo*, 11/08 and 1/12) have something of the quality of Walter Legge-produced projects – well-prepared and refined studio recitals with the excitement of live performance. The second of these was ably assisted by the conducting of Stoyanova's compatriot Pavel Baleff, who here shows understanding for and an ability to obtain the drama and colour – Verdi's unique *tinta* – of each of these different works.

That said, although this Bulgarian soprano has been singing an increasing amount of Verdi in recent seasons, there is not (yet) here the fluency of those earlier discs. The Italian is naturally well studied but the idiom feels more foreign to the artist than the French and Slavic arias of the other recitals.

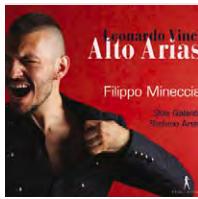
Some of this repertoire – tightly chosen thematically to concentrate on farewells – seems not so suitable for her. She sounds mature for Violetta's goodbye to life (and the reading of Germont *père*'s letter sounds, as so often, like addressing a ship in fog). The exact emotional state of Elisabetta's adieu in *Don Carlo* – wonderfully caught by Baleff and the orchestra in the introduction – is lost in an unnecessarily grand public statement of the opening phrases. Here however, as in Amelia's request to see her children and in the *Otello* excerpt, Stoyanova audibly warms up before our ears to the emotion of the scene. And, in the final analysis – and in final place here – Desdemona's unwitting farewell to life achieves a satisfying and carefully graded emotional response and climax to the disc.

The singer is in good voice throughout and her technique as enviable as ever. The recording quality is most natural, placing Verdi's copious wind solos clearly but naturally in perspective. There's true class here but you may want to sample before committing. **Mike Ashman**

Vinci

'Alto Arias'

Astianatte - Alma grande; **Ti calpesto, oh crudo Amore. Catone in Utica** - Che legge spietata. **La contessa de' Numi** - Non meno risplende. **Eraclae** - Aprirti il seno; In questa mia tempesta. **Ernelinda** - Se soffia irato il vento. **Gismondo re di Polonia** - Bella pace dal seno di Giove. **Medo** - Nella foresta; Taci, o di morte; Vengo a voi, funesti orrori. **Oratorio di Maria dolorata** - Sotto il peso tre sassi cadendo. **Oratorio per la Vergine del Rosario** - Ai lampi del tuo lume^a; Chi mi priega
Filippo Mineccia countertenor **Francesca Cassinari** sop **Stile Galante / Stefano Aresi**
Pan Classics (PC10297 (75' • DDD)



The Florentine countertenor Filippo Mineccia presents 14 alto arias for both male and female characters drawn from nine different works, most of them written between 1725 and 1729 for Naples, Rome and Parma. Stile Galante's occasionally uneven strings do not diminish from committed playing that always conveys the right kind of character. Mineccia's dark-hued singing becomes forced in quick music that might have flourished with smoother elegance. Spirited simile arias comparing a character's predicament to winds and storms always bring vibrant responses from Vinci and his latter-day interpreters, such as 'Se soffia irato il vento' from the Neapolitan opera *Ernelinda* (1726).

Mineccia sings more persuasively in gentler arias, such as Mary Magdalene's solemn description of the tortured Christ carrying his cross to Golgotha ('Sotto il peso tre sassi cadendo', from the undated Neapolitan oratorio *Maria dolorata*), and I enjoyed his tasteful *mesa di voce* entry and limpid embellishments in the pathos-drenched 'Taci, o di morte' (from the Parmesan opera *Medo*, 1728). It was a shrewd plan to place the lilting duet 'Ai lampi del tuo lume' (featuring Francesca Cassinari) and aria 'Chi mi priega' featuring graceful cello obbligato from the oratorio *La Vergine del Rosario* (Naples, 1727) at the centre of the programme. A pair of horns arrive at an opportune moment to illustrate an acerbic complaint about love in 'Ti calpesto, oh crudo Amore' from *Astianatte* (Naples, 1725), whereas the following aria 'Non meno risplende' (from the Roman serenata *La contesa de' Numi*) is elaborated by concertino violins. The cleverly planned recital unveils plenty of unknown Vinci arias but nothing is explained about their original dramatic contexts.

David Vickers

Wagner · Henze

Henze Fraternité Wagner Der fliegende Holländer - Overture. A Faust Overture. Rienzi - Overture; Allmächt'ger Vater^a. Lohengrin - Prelude; In fernem Land^a. Tannhäuser - Overture; Inbrunst im Herzen^a
^a**Jonas Kaufmann** ten
Staatskapelle Dresden / Christian Thielemann
C Major Entertainment (PC 714908;
(DVD) 715004 (108' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i •
DTS-HD MA5.1, DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • S)

Recorded live at the Semperoper, Dresden,

May 21, 2013

Video director Michael Beyer



Germany, and Bayreuth in particular, were not exactly forthcoming with official releases for Wagner 200 year.

Thielemann, the festival's de facto music director, led three birthday concerts of which, it has to be said, this is by far the least interesting in terms of making up a single concert. Hopefully the big choral event in Dresden's Frauenkirche – it included both *Das Liebesmahl der Apostel* and the music for the reburial of Weber's ashes – is still to come. Avid and online collectors will, of course, have had all of this material from Dresden and Bayreuth since last May.

If some hypothetical draconian law were to ban the DVD-ing of one kind of music-making, orchestral concerts by living conductors should be high on the list. By all means let the filming be streamed and accessible but...for regular viewing? The only interesting things that happen here from a visual point of view are Kaufmann's three numbers – aside from his musical achievement he has both natural presence and the ability to put over the content of the narrations in gripping but unobtrusive fashion – and the different degrees to which Thielemann 'knows' the music he conducts (from head in score for the Henze to hardly conducting the *Holländer* and *Tannhäuser* excerpts at all).

Pardon a critic's moans but this is a DVD: the medium is the message, and I found watching this one boring. That said, the music-making is absolutely world-class. Orchestra, conductor and singer do not disappoint, especially the Dresden strings which, on this day, were on some kind of seraphic high of their own. For the record, the Henze is a lovely piece, gorgeously and lushly scored somewhat in the manner of a big-orchestra version of the opera *Elegy for Young Lovers*. It had to be substituted for the commissioned *Isoldes Tod* that the composer's death prevented his completing. Thielemann is quite restrained in the climaxes of the *Holländer* and *Rienzi* overtures but most involved in an expertly paced *Tannhäuser*'s Act 3 narrative. For some reason (chorus balance?) the concert's encore, the Entry of the Guests from *Tannhäuser*, is omitted. The sound is good enough to enjoy the heavenly string tone but a CD would have been more effective.

Mike Ashman

GRAMOPHONE Collector

BOX-SET STRAUSS

David Patrick Stearns opens up the anniversary wares from Universal and Warner Classics, the latter newly flush with EMI's back catalogue



Firing on all cylinders: Birgit Nilsson appears in DG's reissued recording of *Elektra* under Solti

So much opera in relatively small boxes. It's almost science fiction how 10 of Strauss's expansive, generously upholstered works are contained in the 22-disc Warner box, 'Strauss: The Great Operas', while all 15 of the composer's stage works (plus the *Four Last Songs* with Jessye Norman) are in DG's 33-disc 'Complete Operas'. The overview afforded by both boxes has Mozartian parallels, starting with a period of practice operas (beautiful music with compromised theatricality in *Guntram* and *Feuersnot*), early sensations with *Salomé* and *Elektra*, and then more tame, often comic pieces (*Der Rosenkavalier* and *Ariadne auf Naxos*) that show a composer still on the move, though less aggressively so and often looking back (like *La clemenza di Tito*).

The more specific progression shows *Elektra*'s dissonances re-erupting in flashes, even in the bucolic *Daphne*. Though ostensibly *Der Rosenkavalier*'s downmarket cousin, *Arabella* has more under-the-surface complexity. *Rosenkavalier*'s bratty orphans make a ghostly return as unborn children

in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. The Weill-ish social realism of *Friedenstag* comes to fruition in *Die Liebe der Danae*.

Through a quirk in licensing, the same *Intermezzo* is in both boxes; but, that one aside, DG and Warner give distinctly different views of the composer. Example: Warner's uncut *Die schweigsame Frau* is 30 minutes longer than DG's. Cuts are common among Strauss's later, more verbose operas. DG's live 1959 *Schweigsame Frau* has Hans Hotter in uncharacteristically comic territory, with great co-stars – Prey, Gueden and Wunderlich. Warner's 1977 uncut studio *Frau* reveals another long-term trend: vocal casting has veered away from hardcore Wagnerians like Hotter and toward cleaner-voiced Theo Adam. Strauss increasingly sounds Mozartian.

With so many moving parts (and weak links that come with them), Strauss opera

recordings create difficult choices. Some critics dismissed the 1982 Lucia Popp *Daphne* with the Bavarian RSO because its 1964 DG predecessor had authoritative Gueden and Wunderlich. But Gueden was challenged to her limits; the Vienna SO is less than sumptuous. Though conductors Krauss and Böhm knew the composer well, their recordings often struggle to get their arms around the operas.

The Warner box is more artistically consistent: the 1978 *Salomé* starring Hildegard Behrens, the 1956 *Rosenkavalier* with Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, and the aforementioned *Schweigsame Frau* and the 1958 *Capriccio* (again with Schwarzkopf) all maintain their classic status. Sawallisch is a dominant presence, burning at a cooler, more considered temperature than hotheaded Solti but with all elements – sonority, tempo, pacing – in balance. His *Elektra* is marred by vocally declining Eva Marton in the title-role but his uncut *Frau ohne Schatten* is full of fire and magic with a B-plus cast. In *Intermezzo*, Popp is a

knockout comic in a thinly veiled portrayal of the composer's temperamental wife. The Kempe-conducted *Ariadne* once approached classic status but remasterings reveal more vocal strain and less ensemble security. In *Daphne*, Popp is radiant on every level, with poetic support from Bernard Haitink.

The DG box – with more operas and better documentation – has two desert-island discs: the Solti/Birgit Nilsson *Elektra*, with both artists firing on all cylinders, and the live 1963 *Arabella* with the supremely charming Lisa Della Casa in the title-role and Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau tapping great reserves of passion under Joseph Keilberth. Many regard the Solti/Régine Crespin *Der Rosenkavalier* to be better than Karajan/Schwarzkopf (I think it's overcooked).

Solti was less lucky in his *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, which isn't as cogent as Sawallisch's, though singers like Behrens, Domingo and Varady aren't exactly irresistible. The DG box strains to achieve completeness. *Die Liebe der Danae*'s high-pedigree live 1952 performance under Krauss is undercut by a recording that doesn't tap the orchestration's glisten. *Die ägyptische Helena*, recorded in 1979 with the Detroit SO under Dorati, catches Gwyneth Jones in vocal distress. (Both operas are better represented on Telarc.) One find is a beautifully recorded 1978 German radio recording of *Feuersnot* with dramatically alert Erich Leinsdorf leading Shirley-Quirk and Janowitz, both in prime form, though somewhat tested by the vocal writing.

Where I part company is DG's *Salomé*. Though Cheryl Studer is wonderful in Sawallisch's 1987 *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, her 1991 *Salomé* comes out sounding like a lyric soprano in over her head, tentatively backing into notes amid Sinopoli's resplendent conducting. Like the Countess in *Capriccio*, I'm at an impasse in choosing between the DG and EMI recordings of that opera. Schwarzkopf is smarter, Gundula Janowitz more endearing. Straussians may want both boxes if they don't already have individual recordings. Texts and translations must be sought online – the downside of science-fiction Strauss. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



R Strauss 'The Great Operas'

Various artists

Warner Classics ④ (22 discs) 431799-2



R Strauss 'Complete Operas'

Various artists

DG ④ (33 discs) 479 2274GB33

REPLAY

Rob Cowan's monthly survey of historic reissues and archive recordings

Decca celebrates Britten the performer

A 27-disc set illuminates Britten's 'second' career as an interpreter of other composers' music

If ever there was justification for owning two recorded performances of the same masterpiece by the same master musician, it's with the two versions of Mozart's Symphony No 40 that grace this invaluable 27-disc set of **Britten the Performer: Complete Decca Recordings**. The one we already know was recorded with the English Chamber Orchestra in 1968 and, largely because of observed repeats, includes an *Andante* slow movement that plays for more than twice the length of its previously unreleased predecessor, also with the ECO, from 1963. But that isn't my main point. The most striking comparison is for the second subject in the first movement's recapitulation (6'33" in 1963, 6'09" in 1968), where the earlier performance is so much more soulful and expressive.

'I would urge even hard-line period-performance advocates to try his Bach'

Other previously unissued Mozart recordings include a humbling account of the *Masonic Funeral Music*, a vital *Così fan tutte* Overture and two concert arias with Peter Pears, K209 and K420. All are substantial additions to Britten's discography, though I'd rate a 1967 recording of Delius's *Summer Night on the River* (previously out on BBC Legends' 'The Britten Collection') of equal artistic value, like a warm summer embrace, even though woodwind ensemble at the very beginning is rather

shaky – the reason for it not being issued previously, perhaps?

Comparisons between two versions of Schubert's 'Ganymed', one with Kathleen Ferrier (in glorious voice) from 1952, the other with Pears from 1964, illustrate the curve of development in Britten's conception of the piece. Among other Lieder highlights, aside from the celebrated Schubert and Schumann song-cycles, is a comparatively late version of 'Nachtstück', a broadly paced reading (6'20") but, come the central 'Du heil'ge Nacht', virtually set afloat by Pears. And has ever a tenor become Gerontius quite as wholeheartedly as Pears does on Britten's recording of *The Dream* – a performance that, even if you're normally not partial to the quality of Pears's voice, strips away every vestige of sentimentality and reveals Elgar's masterpiece in all its profound glory?

To say that nowadays Britten's way with Baroque music will not be to everyone's taste is rather to state the obvious but I would still urge even hard-line period-performance advocates to try his Bach. The *Brandenburg Concertos* manage inner vitality without pushing for uncomfortably (and, dare I say, unmusical) fast tempi, with superb playing from members of the ECO. The *St John Passion* (with Pears as a compelling Evangelist) was a Britten favourite and his reading is mindful of both scale and meaning, even though by opting for an English translation, the cutting attack of the opening cries 'Herr, unser Herrscher' is quite lost. No such problems greet Purcell's *Fairy Queen* or Handel's

Ode for St Cecilia's Day, both of which are included.

And of course there are the instrumental collaborations, most effectively with Sviatoslav Richter in piano duets by Schubert, the great F minor *Fantasia* all spirit and sinew, and while both players are capable of achieving power and delicacy, they perform the piece as a single, sweeping entity. The longer *Grand Duo* doesn't demand quite as much tightened concentration but again enjoys the benefits of these players' formidable pooled insights, which are also applied to sonatas by Mozart. Collaborations with Rostropovich include works by Schubert, Debussy, Janáček, Bridge and Shostakovich; there are Mozart piano concertos with Clifford Curzon (K466 and 595) and a great deal more (not least Mozart and Haydn symphonies, countless songs, etc).

Philip Reed provides an extremely perceptive essay, naming Elgar, Stravinsky and Britten as the three 20th-century composers who enjoyed the privilege of setting down interpretations of their own works on disc for posterity. I would add one more: Rachmaninov. There were others, of course, but I think Rachmaninov makes that treasurable trio into an in equally treasurable quartet.

THE RECORDING



'Britten the Performer: Complete Decca Recordings'
Decca ⑧ (27 discs)
478 5672DC27



Decca celebrates Britten's conducting, Testament his own music

Yet more Britten

Those of us old enough to remember Concert Hall LPs may well recall **Noel Mewton-Wood**'s thrilling if imperfectly recorded versions of Tchaikovsky's piano concertos (reissued some while ago by *Dante Lys*), as well as concertos by Beethoven, Chopin, Schumann and Stravinsky. Testament's release of a previously unpublished 1946 Wembley Town Hall recording of the revised version of Britten's Piano Concerto shows Mewton-Wood at the very top of his game, a virtuoso with a vast tonal palette at his disposal, especially valuable in Britten's opening Toccata with its formidable cadenza. Though sometimes overlooked when weighing the comparative virtues of 20th-century piano concertos, the Britten is in some respects as imposing as Prokofiev's Second; it certainly approaches the earlier work in terms of scale.

The remainder of the CD is taken up with songs by Mátyás Seiber and Alan Bush sung by a fresh-voiced Peter Pears,

Mewton-Wood adjusting to the role of accompanist as if it were second nature, substantiating the arguments of the poems concerned, whether it be Dunbar's striking 'Timor mortis' in Seiber's *To Poetry* or Blackman's idealistic 'My song is for all men' in Bush's *Voice of the Prophets*. Excellent transfers of fairly acceptable originals.

THE RECORDING

Britten Piano Concerto, etc
Noel Mewton-Wood pf Peter Pears ten
TESTAMENT LSO / Basil Cameron
Testament F SBT1493

Károlyi remembered

Alfred Cortot and Ernő Dohnányi were among the teachers of **Julian von Károlyi** (1914–93), a fine pianist largely forgotten save for an exciting account of Rachmaninov's Second Piano Concerto reissued 10 years ago as part of DG's box-set devoted to the complete recordings of the conductor Hans Rosbaud (11/04). Now Doremi has instigated a Károlyi series in its 'Legendary Treasures' series, starting with works by Schumann, Liszt and Tchaikovsky (DHR7984) and now, in Vol 2, Haydn's

D major Concerto, HobXVIII/11, with the Masterplayers Orchestra, Lugano, under Richard Schumacher (c1967), Beethoven's *Emperor* Concerto with the Bavarian Radio Orchestra under Robert Heger (c1958) and, absolutely tops artistically, a no-holds-barred but at times extremely sensitive account of Schubert's *Wandererfantasie* (also c1958).

This is the only mono recording on the CD, whereas the other two works are captured in passable stereo. The Haydn is chipper, nimble and fairly straightforward, with an on-the-ball accompaniment under Schumacher. Heger's conducting of the *Emperor* is softer-grained while Károlyi's contribution includes, in the first movement, some swift, nimble runs and, in the first half of the *Adagio*, well-nigh perfect pacing of the principal melody. Only the finale would have benefited from a touch more panache but still, it's a distinctive performance, warmly (if not too clearly) recorded, and the transfers

are excellent. But the *Wanderer* really is worth hearing.

THE RECORDING

Beethoven Pf Conc No 5
Haydn Pf Conc, HobXVIII/11
Schubert Wandererfantasie
Julian von Károlyi pf
Doremi M DHR8009

Casals's 'other' Dvořák

For many of us who heard about it on the grapevine, **Pablo Casals**'s 1960 stereo recording of the Dvořák Cello Concerto with the Festival Casals Orchestra of Puerto Rico under Alexander Schneider was, until Pristine prepared this reissue, beginning to fall into the realms of myth. I'd first picked up the rumour years ago, stimulated to curiosity by the excellence of so many 'late' Casals recordings. Pristine offers one such recording as a fill-up to the Dvořák here: the 1953 Prades Festival Schumann Concerto with Eugene Ormandy conducting. Some may baulk at Casals's audible groaning, his excessive emphases and lacerating attack (there are times when his bow sounds like a weapon of war), but the way he gauges the pauses before he 'strikes' and, above all, the eloquence of so much of his phrasing make for an unforgettable listening experience.

There are similar moments in the Dvořák, although the engineers have placed Casals more at a distance than on the Schumann – perhaps a sensible option given his fall from technical grace. Schneider conducts a strong and supportive accompaniment, just as Ormandy does in the Schumann, and although Casals's interpretation is recognisably the one he offered us with the Czech Philharmonic in the late 1930s (under George Szell), or at least very similar to it, by his 84th year (which is when this recording was made) the full measure of the concerto was rather beyond him. But, as Mark Obert-Thorn suggests in a sympathetic note, it's remarkable that he played it at all; and when I say there are memorable 'moments', I'm not fibbing. If you don't expect too much, then you may well be surprised at what Casals achieves at such a venerable age. I was. G

THE RECORDING

Dvořák. Schumann Cello Concertos Casals; Fest Casals Orch; Prades Fest Orch / Schneider, Ormandy
Pristine Audio M PASC401

Books



Peter Dickinson welcomes back Vivian Perlis's Copland memoirs:
'The main thing was to get this invariably readable and attractive portrait of Copland available again for new generations'



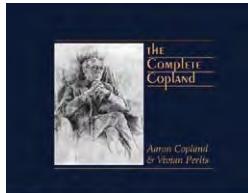
Jeremy Dibble reads a new collection of essays on Vaughan Williams:
'I found my admiration for this colossus of British music – a true visionary – continued to grow exponentially'

The Complete Copland

By Aaron Copland and Vivian Perlis

Pendragon Press, HB, 360pp, £60.50

ISBN 978-1-576-47190-6



The widow of the composer Irving Fine, in an interview with

Vivian Perlis, claimed: 'Aaron [Copland] was not only a great composer; he was a great human being.' Anyone fortunate enough to have known Copland can confirm this – and he knew his worth. When I told him about a new book on American music, he said he had seen it at the bookstore: 'It had two sentences about me. I put it right back on the shelf!' When somebody told Stravinsky that Copland was 'a very good American composer', the great man came straight back and said: 'Why American? He is a very good composer.' Copland said: 'I would like to be remembered through my music.' He will be.

Copland's versatility was astounding. He contributed to the work of many musical organisations; he regularly played the piano in exemplary style in his own music; and he taught at the New School in New York – where his lectures were transcribed as *What to Listen for in Music* – and also at Tanglewood for over 20 years. Although he was offered a position at Juilliard, Copland stayed freelance and made it. He stopped composing in the 1970s but continued his international conducting career into the 1980s, until the onset of dementia.

Copland is regarded as the quintessentially American composer but, in spite of his years in Paris, he was in many ways pan-American. From *El Salón México* onwards he used Latin American sources; he spoke Spanish; Carlos Chávez was a good friend, who conducted the difficult *Short Symphony* in Mexico City 10 years before it was premiered in the US; and Copland spent time in Mexico

and made goodwill visits to South American countries, generously bringing back scores of the leading composers, mostly unknown in the north.

Virgil Thomson quipped that every town in the US had a five-and-dime store and a Nadia Boulanger pupil. Copland was the most prominent of all her students. She propelled him into writing his *Organ Symphony* for her to perform; and, as with some of her other students, notably Lennox Berkeley, she was consulted regularly. Her approval mattered. Some people regretted Copland's work for films but he took the medium seriously and his scores exemplified a low-density backcloth to the pictures, so different from inflated Hollywood monstrosities.

Vivian Perlis practically invented the concept of oral history with her programme of audio and video interviews in the archive at Yale University. Starting in the later 1960s, she recorded the voices of many important American and other composers and those who had known them. This was a rescue operation of enormous significance – she caught the recollections of influential people before they died. Perlis worked closely with Copland, recording and editing his memoirs, which were published in two volumes (1984/1989). These unique sources supported further studies such as Howard Pollack's substantial *Aaron Copland: the Life and Work of an Uncommon Man* (Henry Holt: 1999; 5/00). Perlis was a founding member of what has become the Copland Fund and she contributes a Postlude about its activities, disbursing as much as \$1m annually from the composer's assets.

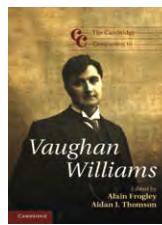
The two volumes Copland did with Perlis can be welcomed back. The format had to accommodate two substantial books – over 800 pages. The publisher's solution is an inconvenient double book a foot wide and the photographs are not as clear as the originals. But the main thing was to get this invariably readable and attractive portrait of Copland available again for new generations. The only deterrent is the price. **Peter Dickinson**

The Cambridge Companion to Vaughan Williams

Edited by Alain Frogley and Aidan J Thomson

Cambridge University Press, PB, 358pp, £19.99

ISBN 978-0-521-16290-6



Vaughan Williams could be said to be a household name – *The Lark Ascending* and the *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis* are national favourites, as anyone who listens to Classic FM will testify. Yet, as this new book on the composer makes clear from the outset, a critical assessment of his considerable output and his importance has met with a surprising disparity of views. Moreover, the amount of scholarly commentary on his achievements and influence has been comparatively sparse. AEF Dickinson's study of 1963 and the pioneering biography by Michael Kennedy (who contributes an interesting account of Vaughan Williams's fluctuating reception history) were for many years the mainstay of reference, until the more recent publication of Alain Frogley's *Vaughan Williams Studies* (CUP: 1996), *Vaughan Williams in Perspective* (ed Lewis Foreman; Albion: 1998), Lionel Pike's *Vaughan Williams and the Symphony* (Toccata Press: 2003) and David Manning's *Vaughan Williams on Music* (OUP: 2008). Yet a modern, more comprehensive examination of this towering figure has been absent for some time, so it is with much pleasure that this volume has finally appeared in Cambridge University Press's catalogue of Composer Companions.

One of the most extraordinary impressions that one gets from reading the 14 chapters of this book is the sheer range and industry of a man who lived a long and productive life and retained a creative fecundity well into his eighties. Byron Adams's admirably balanced chapter on the composer's apprenticeship reminds us that, among the array of teachers with



Joint account: Aaron Copland at the piano with his literary collaborator and colleague Vivian Perlis, who 'practically invented the concept of oral history'

whom he studied – Parry, Stanford, Bruch and Ravel – he developed a resilient artistic personality that was able to sift through and assimilate a broad range of musical styles and aesthetics, while retaining from Parry a belief in the role of music as a democratic agency. This element remained a central principle of Vaughan Williams's outlook throughout his life, as is evident from Julian Onderdonk's thought-provoking chapters on the composer's approach to politics (like Parry, somewhat left of centre), the role of the amateur and a passionate belief in the notion of nationalism, and the ardour that Vaughan Williams brought to the genre of the hymn through the seminal publications of the *English Hymnal* (1906), *Songs of Praise* (1925) and the *Oxford Book of Carols* (1928). Likewise, the ambivalent relationship that existed between Vaughan Williams and the BBC is discerningly argued by Jenny Doctor.

In a book of this nature only so much room can be devoted to detailed scrutiny of Vaughan Williams's substantial output, yet there is much here to whet our appetite. We are given a fascinating picture by Aidan Thomson of the reception of Vaughan

Williams's music during the period before and after the First World War (a critical time in his life when his reputation was steadily earned as a late-developer), which is well complemented by Alain Frogley's account of the first three symphonies and the early orchestral works (many of them, such as the *Three Impressions* for orchestra, only recently recorded). Julian Horton's succinct examination of the later symphonies reminds us how Vaughan Williams's later career blossomed with the production of six further highly varied canvases between 1934 and 1957, and how the composer engaged with extraordinarily fertile and genuinely intellectual processes of organisation which are surely the equal of those harnessed by Bartók, Stravinsky or Prokofiev. Similarly, Christopher Mark throws light on the significance of the early chamber music and *The Lark Ascending* (a concerto-manqué based to all intents and purposes on the cadenza), as well as the other concertos, for violin, piano and tuba. Then there are informative commentaries on the choral works by Charles McGuire, who provides us with a tripartite perspective of Vaughan Williams – the festival

composer from the early pre-war days (1906–14), the festival mainstay between the wars (1920–38) and the pre-eminent choral master of his generation (1939–58) – while Eric Saylor provides insights into two less familiar regions of Vaughan Williams's output – his music for the stage and for the film screen. When so much emphasis has been thrown on the success of Britten's operatic ventures, it is perhaps forgotten that Vaughan Williams not only loved opera himself but invested much of his time and energy in the genre. Similarly, we also overlook the vigour and alacrity which, at the age of 68, he brought to the composition of his first film score, *49th Parallel*, as his means of assisting the war effort.

This volume makes for both a challenging and a stimulating read which I found hard to put down. More importantly, however, I found my admiration for this colossus of British music – a true visionary, a figure of immeasurable influence and a man of immense humanity – continued to grow exponentially.

Jeremy Dibble

Classics RECONSIDERED



R Strauss

Der Rosenkavalier

Soprano: Elisabeth Schwarzkopf; Mezzo-soprano: Christa Ludwig; Alto: Octavian; Bass: Baron Ochs; Philharmonia Orchestra / Conductor: Herbert von Karajan
EMI/Warner Classics ⑧ ⑨ 966824-2 (3h 11' • ADD)
From Columbia 33CX1492/5

Elisabeth Schwarzkopf has obviously made a profound study of her part: it will count amongst the finest things she has done, and



Richard Fairman and **Hugo Shirley** have been listening to Herbert von Karajan's 1956 EMI recording of Richard Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier* – does it stand the test of time?



may well be the finest. I can best sum up the effect of her performance by saying that it drew tears from me more than once. I could scarcely believe that Christa Ludwig was the same singer whom I last heard as a rather lackadaisical Dorabella in Decca's *Così fan tutte*. Here, singing beautifully, she is the ardent and impulsive young Octavian to the life, and full of tenderness in her scenes with Sophie. As compared to Decca's Hilde Gueden, Stich-Randall's more finely poised and

very pure high notes are invaluable in her part. In all the duets both of these singers are admirable. Otto Edelmann is a splendid and full-blooded Ochs. There is nothing to choose between Gedda's and Dermota's singing of the Italian Tenor.

Karajan's treatment of the marvellous score is perhaps less emotional than [Erich] Kleiber's [for Decca] but it is full of beautifully wrought detail, abundant vitality and sensitivity.

Alec Robertson (12/57)

Richard Fairman Unlike most people of my generation, I didn't grow up with this recording. Early exposure to Régine Crespin's intoxicating recording of Ravel's *Sherazade* meant that I automatically sought out Solti's *Rosenkavalier*, where she sings the Marschallin. It was some years before I heard the Karajan set and I was immediately struck by how much firmer a grasp of rhythm the whole performance has. Hearing it again now, I still feel that Karajan achieves a good synthesis of the Classical and the Romantic. Hugo, as a younger listener, you must have come to Karajan by a different route?

Hugo Shirley I came late to the Karajan, too. As an impatient child of the CD era, I remember finding it too slow to offer up the sensual delights that I wanted. The sound shows its age now, with the bloom of more recent sets (my first *Rosenkavalier* was the impeccably engineered Haitink recording) notably absent. And it is very much a manufactured studio product: not a single word is lost, for example, which would never happen in the theatre. The precision of it all is remarkable, that's for sure, and what really strikes me is how successful Karajan is in

bringing the score's wordier passages – usually dismissed as padding – to life.

RF Oh dear, you've hit straight on my problem area with *Der Rosenkavalier*. Do I dare admit in these pages that what I really want from this opera is the highlights disc?

HS Shocking! But that's right. In the theatre the 'padding' is necessary for the pacing: it can't all be *Sachertorte* and cream. But it's not stuff one necessarily wants to sit through repeatedly at home.

RF Of course, Hofmannsthal's libretto is uniquely wonderful in many ways, but it has at least twice as many words as it needs, and then Strauss compounds the problem by employing an orchestra so big that you can't hear most of them. I despair of the number of times I have sat through *Rosenkavalier* in the opera house and hardly heard a word. I feel that being able to hear so many of the words is actually one of the great strengths of this set. And isn't that, at least partially, because the cast is made up primarily of native German-speakers? That's something we have lost more recently.

HS You're right, of course, and the more verbose passages at least get a fair chance. But during the first two acts, at least, I felt that they were the recording's greatest strength; if that's the case, for me it means that I'm not getting carried away by the 'highlights' in the way I should. The set occasionally feels like a compromise: it has neither the messiness and rough-and-tumble you get in the theatre, nor the indulgence that defines some studio recordings.

RF Do you get the same feeling from the individual singers?

HS Well, it's only in the final act (and, really, only in the trio) that I stop noticing the oddities in Schwarzkopf's and Stich-Randall's performances. In the Presentation of the Rose, for example, Stich-Randall's Sophie is certainly dreamy, but mainly because she sounds as though she's half asleep! Schwarzkopf's virtues and/or faults are familiar, too, but her Marschallin occasionally sounds like she's in a radio play rather than an opera.

RF I know what you mean. I caught every Schwarzkopf recital I could in her last years



Elisabeth Schwarzkopf singing the role of Strauss's Marschallin

and for all the extraordinarily weird mannerisms I found much of what she sang absolutely gripping. But some of the recordings are problematic. But you didn't respond to my point about having a German-speaking cast...

HS Yes, of course, although we shouldn't forget that Stich-Randall, despite the name, was born in Connecticut! And those Schwarzkopf mannerisms do nearly negate the advantages of her being a native speaker, even if one could argue that such poised artificiality is in part what this work's all about.

RF But I guess you feel this less with the other singers?

HS Yes, there the advantages are definitely a lot more clear-cut. Otto Edelmann, though not the most cavernously bassy Baron Ochs, really does revel in Hofmannsthal's language, without ever sounding laboured or self-conscious.

RF As you have lived and studied in Vienna, your grasp of German is surer than mine. I recall Schwarzkopf giving a lecture at the

British Institute of Recorded Sound, in which she compared different recordings of *Der Rosenkavalier*. I seem to remember that she praised Edelmann because of the care he took over his period Viennese accent. In fact, I am inclined to think she discussed her own performance as the Marschallin in the same terms...

HS Well, as we know, all questions of 'period authenticity' are very tricky, and Ochs is, of course, the Marschallin's country cousin. The dialect Hofmannsthal created for him reflects this – as does his manner with Sophie, weighing her up as if assessing livestock! So to talk of a Viennese accent is perhaps not strictly correct: it's more a matter of sounding entirely convincing as the character Strauss and Hofmannsthal created, which Edelmann really does, to my ears at least. And we never lose the important sense that there is still a touch of nobility hidden away somewhere.

RF We haven't mentioned Christa Ludwig – she wasn't first choice for Octavian...

HS The story is that Sena Jurinac wasn't available, for contractual reasons, and

Karajan wanted Irmgard Seefried. Ludwig was Walter Legge's choice, and happily her performance really is the one that it's difficult to have any reservations about. This Octavian is perfectly pitched, and the Mariandl episodes, in particular, are natural-sounding and funny.

RF I am glad you have positive feelings about her, because Ludwig seems to me one of the big successes of the set. A young voice (she was 28 at the time), but already on a fully Romantic scale, clear and firm, and without any sign that she finds such a taxing role as this a strain.

HS Yes, it is a wonderful performance: ardent but restrained. And that restraint reminds me of something interesting Ludwig said about her recording (of the Marschallin) with Bernstein. In her view, he didn't understand that in Vienna, if you're crying on one side of your face, you're always smiling on the other.

RF That adds to the point I made earlier about Karajan striking a balance between the Classical and Romantic sides of the piece.

HS Yes, and it's also striking how 'native' he makes the Philharmonia sound: their playing has just the right sort of delicacy and subtle lilt. But am I alone, still, in finding that the balance does go a bit too far towards the Classical? The piece, after all, is multi-layered, and its 'classicism' exists only within that 19th- and 20th-century musical language.

RF I must say I'm very happy now to have the Karajan CDs in my collection. Everything about this recording is high-quality in one way or another.

HS And that tended to be Legge's aim with his recordings: to produce a high-quality representation of a score for home listening that exists as just that, rather than as an imperfect reflection of the piece in performance. As such, it's an undeniable success.

RF Shall we summarise by saying it is an ideal touchstone for comparisons?

HS Why not? Bigger-hearted, more immediately, viscerally emotional singing and conducting can be found elsewhere, but as an overall achievement, this set's still hard to beat. **G**

THE SPECIALIST'S GUIDE TO...

The oriental in early music

With a Hitchcock film as his starting point, **Edward Breen** explores the fruitful border between early music and ethnomusicology and selects a colourful array of recordings to explore

In Alfred Hitchcock's *The Lady Vanishes* (1938) two seemingly innocent representations of Balkan music intersect – or, should I say, interrupt – each other. Miss Froy is listening to a folk singer busking below her window in his light (and very British) baritone voice when she is interrupted by thumping

from above. A passionate young musicologist is notating a folk dance as performed in his top-floor room by three peasants in traditional costume dancing to the tune of his clarinet. He gives the complaining manager an earful: 'You dare to call that a noise? The ancient music with which your peasant ancestors

celebrated every wedding for countless generations – the dance they danced when your father married your mother? [...] I am putting on record, for the benefit of mankind, one of the lost folk dances of central Europe...'

Hitchcock's musicologist is adamant that the past is right before him. So why, on the other hand, does the singer sound like a moonlighting BBC announcer? The clash between these two representations of folk music lays bare an issue that early music performers know only too well: if we really do believe that glimmerings of past instrumental and dance practices are somehow ossified in folk culture, we have also to consider vocal timbres. Anything less would be cherry-picking.

In the pursuit of what we once called 'authentic', the boundaries between ethnomusicology and the study of early music are frequently blurred. Thurston Dart taught his students to 'travel in space' in order to 'travel in time', and much early music from the 1960s and '70s onwards leant heavily on 'Eastern' practices. With hindsight, it is no surprise that interest should have peaked in the 1960s, when air travel and LP technology bridged the gap between the Orient and the Occident. Furthermore, a domestic industry for cultural exploration, ranging from Folkways Records to the exotic panoramas of the View-Master Stereoscope, was catering to a generation who had seen far corners of the world during the Second World War and had passed on their wonderment to their children – the very baby boomers who eagerly consumed the early music revival of the 1970s.

The following selection (many of which are readily available as digital downloads), while by no means exhaustive, aims to show some of the contours of such cultural cross-fertilisation. ©



From the *Cantigas de santa maria*, a collection of 420 Galician-Portuguese songs from the 14th century



10 *Carmina burana*
Studio der Frühen Musik /
Thomas Binkley
Warner Classics (S) ②
2564 69765-9 (5/67^R)

This groundbreaking album (1964) in Binkley's 'Arabic style' drew directly from Arab-Andalusian traditions which the ensemble had experienced first hand in North Africa. In Andalusian practice they found accompaniment patterns and a rich tradition of improvised preludes and postludes. These performers' dedication is clear – even with fluidity of tempo and phrasing the musical ensemble is always tight, belying hours of practice and a commitment to performing from memory.



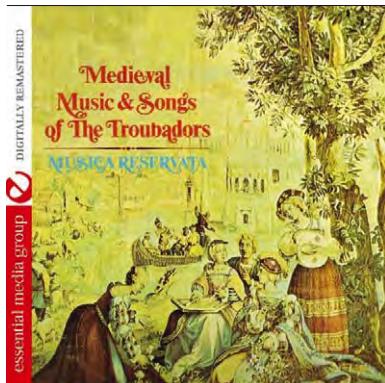
7 *Bella donna*
Sinfonye / Stevie Wishart
Hyperion (B) CDH55207 (6/88^R)

The group Sinfonye burst on to the scene in 1988 with this selection of music for medieval women sung by Mara Kiek, whose vocal precision rivals that of Jantina Noorman (see No 1 below) for sheer energetic Balkan-styled technique. Again, the percussion catches orientalist currents, with a northern Spanish *pandeiro* and a Moroccan *bendir*; but listen out for the mesmeric playing of Stevie Wishart, who drones across several strings at once on the medieval fiddle.

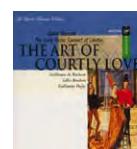


4 *Ockeghem:
Missa 'Caput'*
Graindelavoix /
Björn Schmelzer
Glossa (F) GCDP32101

Graindelavoix's Ockegham Mass is peppered with stylish embellishment: use of vocal ornaments in the early Renaissance is under-represented on disc, but frustratingly the booklet-notes fail to explain the rationale behind these performances. The resulting sound-world, however, is about as far removed from the Oxbridge choral tradition as possible, and to prove it, their website boasts a picture of two old men with superb Balkan moustaches.

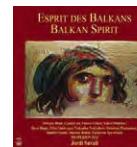


1



9 *The Art of
Courtly Love*
The Early Music Consort
of London / David Munrow
Virgin Veritas (M) ② ▶
VED 561284-2 (9/96)

The ultra-charismatic director David Munrow was famous for playing medieval dance music at breakneck speed with a dexterity of instrumental technique that still dazzles today. He honed his shawm technique with street musicians in Cairo, and both his ornamentation and his drone patterns display North African influences. On this 1973 album, *Istampitta Tre fontane* is assigned to the recorder – with trills and flourishes aplenty.



6 *Balkan Spirit*
Hespèrion XXI et al /
Jordi Savall
Alia Vox (M) AVSA9898 (12/13)

Crossing in the other direction, Savall leads his early musicians into a partnership with Balkan instrumentalists as they explore the music of central Europe. The term 'Balkan', Savall reminds us, derives from two Turkish words meaning 'honey' and 'blood', and this disc certainly highlights the sweet and the strong in equal measure. The music is infused with the influence of Roma (or Gypsy) culture, and in the Romanian *Doina*, *Purtata*, *Hora* medieval dance resonances seem most pronounced.



3 *Mediterraneo*
L'Arpegiata /
Christina Pluhar
Virgin Classics (F)
464547-2 (4/13)

This is another example of crossing over from 'early' to 'folk', but this time it's a Baroque ensemble. Pluhar leads her musicians through a dazzling maze of sounds as they criss-cross the Mediterranean from Portugal to Turkey, Greece, Tunisia and Italy. The group combines a variety of traditional plucked instruments (*qānūn*, *saz*, *lyra*, Greek *lavta*, Portuguese guitar and so on) with the exquisitely deft Baroque strings of L'Arpegiata.



8 *A Dance in the
Garden of Mirth*
The Dufay Collective
Chandos (F) CHAN9320
This tub-thumping selection

of medievalisms has lost none of its freshness and vitality since it was first released in 1994 – and it is still one of the most more-ish (*sic*) discs on the market. The album opens with the 14th-century *Istanpitta 'Ghaetta'*, in which traditional Moroccan and Indian percussion instruments combine with rebecs, a vielle and a traditional long-necked Turkish lute to create an extremely attractive and rich tapestry of sound. This is an early-music evergreen.



5 *Dancing in Tetuán*
Joglaresa / Belinda Sykes
Joglaresa Live (F) JOGO03
Joglaresa describe this disc as a collection of 'Judeo-Arabic dance songs, Sephardic wedding songs, Berber rhythms and Moorish romanzas from the heady, hot spices of Andalusia and the Maghreb' – and they have a point: it's like having a street band in your lounge. Lead vocalist and director Belinda Sykes is a vocal and cultural chameleon; having studied in Morocco, Bulgaria, Syria, Spain and India, she sweeps aside conservative early music conceptions with her spectacular singing.



2 *Liquefacta est...*
Ensemble Naya /
Yaniv d'Or counteroten
NAYA (F) 667

Uniting East and West through the Song of Songs, British-Israeli countertenor Yaniv d'Or and his silken falsetto cross effortlessly between traditional Baroque and folk styles with this touching and thoughtful programme. Ensemble Naya was founded to explore the musical heritage of Jewish culture and set out to create 'a mesmerising dialogue between early western music and musical traditions from the entire world'. This disc certainly does that, and the sound is incredibly attractive.

1

Medieval Music & Songs of the Troubadors

Musica Reservata / John Beckett • Everest 3270 (11/68^R)

The chance hearing of Romanian folk dances in a 1950s Hampstead record shop triggered Michael Morrow's Damascene conversion to Balkan and Mediterranean sounds as a template for early music. With folklorist Bert Lloyd, he convinced the young Dutch mezzo Jantina Noorman to create the same 'bite and attack' as the instruments she performed with. In a broadcast live from a packed Festival Hall

in London in 1968, Morrow's BBC script politely introduced Raimbaut de Vaqueiras's *Kalenda maya* as being performed in 'outdoors style'. Few have managed to match the sheer energy and eye-watering accuracy of Noorman's tone.



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THE GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION

'A triumph of purely musical means'

Andrew Achenbach surveys the recordings of Vaughan Williams's Symphony No 4, a work of unusual ferocity that naturally lends itself to a wide array of interpretative approaches

No work by Ralph Vaughan Williams has caused more of a stir or given rise to greater speculation than his craggy and ferocious Symphony in F minor. It was written between 1931 and 1934, and first performed at Queen's Hall, London, on April 10, 1935, when Adrian Boult conducted the BBC Symphony Orchestra. Among the many notable figures present were Arnold Bax (the work's dedicatee), Constant Lambert, Albert Coates, Hamilton Harty and William Walton, who, having attended the rehearsals, told his fellow composer Arthur Benjamin that they 'were going to hear the greatest symphony since Beethoven'. An astute observation in more ways than one: Vaughan Williams himself later stated that the grinding minor ninth with which the symphony opens was 'cribbed' from the start of the finale of Beethoven's Ninth, while Beethoven's Fifth provided the template for the unforgettably expectant bridge passage between the *Scherzo* and finale.

Some commentators claimed that the symphony's uncompromising violence, toughness of expression and level of dissonance represented an entirely new departure for its creator. They were mistaken. In hindsight, the work can now be viewed as the culmination of an increasingly adventurous and individual period during which Vaughan Williams had further enriched and intensified his expressive and harmonic language in works such as the oratorio *Sancta civitas* (1923–25), *Flos campi* (1925), the Piano Concerto (1926–31, and which, like the symphony, also boasts a fugal finale) and the magnificent 'masque for dancing' *Job* (1927–30). Only later did

the suggestion arise that the work's abrasive demeanour represented a warning against the rising tide of fascism. In fact, the score originally took shape prior to Hitler's rule in Germany and Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia. In a letter from December 1937, Vaughan Williams scotched any such non-musical links: 'I wrote it not as a definite picture of anything external – eg the state of Europe – but simply because it occurred to me like this...It is what I wanted to do at the time.' (This chimes precisely with the famous – and entirely characteristic – remark he came out with during the symphony's first rehearsals: 'I don't know whether I like it, but it's what I meant'.)

Even so, loyal friends and colleagues remained unconvinced, among them Boult, who wrote in the *Musical Times* of October 1958 that Vaughan Williams 'foresaw the whole thing [ie war] and surely there is no more magnificent gesture of disgust in all music than the final open fifth when the composer seems to rid himself of the whole hideous idea'. Personally, I've always liked biographer Michael Kennedy's description of it as 'a kind of self-portrait: the towering rages of which Vaughan Williams was capable, his robust humour, his poetic nature – all these are here'.

Of one thing, however, I am absolutely sure: the mighty Fourth enshrines a triumph of purely musical means, and its sinewy, relentless logic marks it out as arguably the most tautly conceived of Vaughan Williams's nine symphonies.

BEGINNING AT THE BBC

No one tears into the introductory measures with quite the lacerating fury

summoned by **Vaughan Williams** himself in his legendary October 1937 HMV recording with the BBC SO. It's a reading of incendiary force, unstoppable in its thrusting momentum (it remains the only performance to date that clocks in at under half an hour), and with tension-levels quite extraordinarily high for a studio project – the concluding 'Epilogo fugato' has seldom, if ever, sounded more hair-raising in its cumulative frenzy. At the same time, what reserves of lyrical ardour the composer draws from the BBC strings in their soaring cantilena barely a minute into the work: the marking is *appassionato sostenuto* (with a further request at the bottom of the page for 'Melodic parts long bows') – and that is precisely what we get here. I'd also cite the violins' memorable *cantabile* tone at the start of the slow movement (itself irreproachably well paced throughout), and in the *Tranquillo* coda at fig 14 (7'54") listen to how subtly yet insistently the trombones choir the seminal four-note motif heard at the symphony's outset beneath the principal flute's lonely cadenza.

There are three further offerings featuring the BBC SO, all very different from each other. The earliest, a broadcast from 1950, finds **Sir John Barbirolli** at his inspirationally committed and characterful best in an adrenaline-fuelled traversal that adds some five and a half minutes to Vaughan Williams's own account. The first two movements are hugely imposing in their gaunt implacability and very real sense of dread, yet the *Scherzo* has an invigorating spring in its step as well as a welcome dash of humour (I hear echoes of Satan's gleeful cavortings in *Job*). The finale, on the other



Vaughan Williams outside The White Gates,
the house in Dorking where he lived until 1953



Memorably lucid: Vernon Handley

hand, has never sounded more grimly sardonic than here, its cataclysmic closing bars smouldering with indignant rage.

A bar goes missing at three bars before fig 8 (1'19") in the *Scherzo*, but don't let that blip deter you from investigating this wholly arresting document for yourselves. One textual observation of particular interest: Barbirolli's is the earliest version in our survey (and, indeed, may conceivably have been the first performance anywhere) to incorporate the composer's decision to alter the principal flute's last note in the slow movement from F to E.

Like Barbirolli, **Sir Malcolm Sargent** shrewdly obeys the *con anima* marking in the closing fugue, which he stokes to a satisfyingly fiery and rugged culmination. His August 1963 Proms rendering is nowhere near as harrowing as Barbirolli's but possesses many solid virtues of its own, not least an abundant musicality, clear-headed purpose and welcome clarity of line.

If recorded sound were the sole criterion, then **Sir Andrew Davis**'s 1992 Teldec version would win every prize going – in terms of naturalness of timbre, breathtaking range and judicious balance, Tony Faulkner's engineering serves

up a feast for the ears. Sadly, the actual performance seldom hits full stride: Davis fights curiously shy of any darker emotions and the finished article – for all its agreeable polish – never manages to throw off the shackles of the studio.

On his athletic 1991 recording for RCA, **Leonard Slatkin** sets off at a cracking pace, the explosive energy at once reminiscent of the composer's own interpretation, and throughout he draws playing of stunning refinement, unruffled co-ordination and intoxicating sheen from the Philharmonia – even at the hell-for-leather pace Slatkin adopts for the *Scherzo* and finale, the orchestra's composure remains commendably intact. And maybe that's part of the problem, for there's a lingering whiff of slickness here, a persistent disquiet that not all of the music's knotty rigour and (in the here slightly distended slow movement) transcendental awe has been as probingly quarried as it might have been.

Recorded just a few months before Slatkin's, **Vernon Handley**'s RLPO account (originally for EMI Eminence and since reissued on Cfp) yields the more durable rewards. His is a shrewdly plotted and memorably lucid conception. Not only does he secure splendidly alert and fresh-faced results from his willing Merseyside cohorts, he also directs with unswerving fidelity to both the letter and the spirit of the score. Handley invariably has the happy knack of alighting upon the *tempo giusto* (his ideally flowing *Andante moderato* for the slow movement comes close to the ideal). Perhaps, just perhaps, the very last ounce of shredded emotion is missing – Handley's defiantly unsensual manner doesn't fray the nerves as much as some might wish. No matter, Mike Hatch's demonstration-worthy sound sets the seal on a genuinely

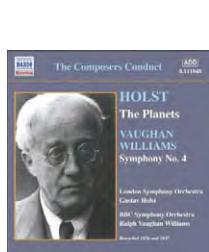
classy display. Minimal wallet-damage, too, at Cfp's asking price.

Neither, of course, will **Paul Daniel**'s 2003 Naxos recording break the bank: the Bournemouth SO respond with eagerness and pleasing discipline (the *Scherzo* goes with fine rhythmic snap), and Daniel steers an enjoyably trim, always watchful and eminently sure-footed course, but there's a lack of sheer heft (both tonal and emotional) and it remains something of a lightweight in such big-hitting company.

FROM NORTH AMERICA

Let me now turn to a healthy clutch of offerings from North America – and first up come three versions featuring the NYPO. In his typically big-hearted 1965 recording, **Leonard Bernstein** takes a relatively expansive view of the first two movements. The result is just a little heavy on its pins and (in the slow movement especially) even a touch indulgent, though there's much to savour: listen to the bleached intensity of the strings in the first movement's ineffably haunting coda and also the way that Bernstein teases out the sinewy logic of Vaughan Williams's enjoyably knotty counterpoint – such reassuringly solid violas, cellos and basses from the *Meno mosso* at fig 15 (5'23") in the first movement's recapitulation. Apart from a touch of raggedness in the divided violins' fearsomely tricky *pp leggiero* writing around fig 10 (1'38"), the *Scherzo* has real fire in its belly and Bernstein whips up the finale's 'Epilogo fugato' into quite a frenzy.

Dimitri Mitropoulos's 1956 version with the same orchestra is a rather less self-aware, more cogent affair, yet with no loss of intensity. Again, the orchestral playing is splendidly alert and unfailingly eloquent (nowhere more so than in the slow movement), and my sole reservation of



THE HISTORIC CHOICE

BBC SO / Ralph Vaughan Williams

Naxos (S) 8 11048

The passing years have not dimmed the burning intensity and raw power of Vaughan Williams's own world premiere recording from 1937. Mark Obert-Thorn's transfer for Naxos is exemplary, and this deserves a place in every collection.



THE UNNERVING CHOICE

BBC SO / Sir John Barbirolli

Barbirolli Society (S) SJB1064

Barbirolli's remarkably spacious 1950 live performance lives more dangerously than any other in our survey. The bare-faced fury of the symphony's culmination has to be heard to be believed, its final hammer-blow a brutal, sickening thud.



THE DARK HORSE

Toronto SO / Peter Oundjian

TSO Live (F) TSO0311

Peter Oundjian outshines many a more celebrated rival in this symphony. His is a consistently illuminating, pleasingly unforced conception, complemented by splendidly articulate and dedicated work from the Toronto band.

note is that Mitropoulos rather skates over the devastatingly potent (and sublimely inevitable-sounding) return – at fig 13 (2'55") in the finale – of the *Lento* material from the end of the first movement.

Music & Arts has also unearthed an utterly compelling account from this same team captured three years earlier at Carnegie Hall. Perhaps not surprisingly, given its live provenance, this has an extra freedom, edge-of-seat danger and combustible spark that give it the edge over its studio counterpart: lyrical ardour and tender compassion combine to unforgettable effect in both the first-movement coda and all of the succeeding *Andante* (where one can almost feel the tears spilling from the violins' opening cantilena). A thrilling find, in sum, which offers ample evidence as to precisely why Mitropoulos's deeply felt interpretation won the enthusiastic approbation of the composer. With sound that is remarkably vivid for its vintage, this is most definitely worth hunting down.

I have a lot of time for **Peter Oundjian's** live performance from 2011 with the Toronto SO, an intelligently paced affair with cogent musicality, muscular grit and real guts in its favour, yet also generously flecked with newly minted observation. What's more, his home-town band respond in conspicuously eloquent and eager fashion, the string-playing (in the slow movement especially) displaying both striking composure and nourishing expressive fibre.

In purely sonic terms the Canadians are outgunned by **Carlos Kalmar** and the Oregon Symphony on Pentatone Classics, though the slightly dry acoustic mitigates against the last ounce of hush (you'd never guess the flute solo at the end of the slow movement was marked *pp*). This is a superbly proficient display and obviously the result of painstaking preparation, but Kalmar's interpretation is wanting just a fraction in penetration and grip (the finale's main *Allegro molto* strikes me as a little too flashy to be entirely convincing), and there's the occasional bronchial contribution from the auditorium to contend with, too.

Leon Botstein's disappointingly laboured (and, at times, none-too-tidy) rendering at the helm of the American Symphony Orchestra need not detain us here, but do check out an audibly galvanised Boston Symphony under the feisty direction of **Sir Colin Davis** from October 26, 1973 – just listen to Everett 'Vic' Firth's gunshot tempos ricochet around Symphony Hall in the *Scherzo*!

Another live document worth experiencing is **Leopold Stokowski's**



Abundant musicality, clear-headed purpose and welcome clarity of line: Sir Malcolm Sargent

radio broadcast from March 14, 1943, with the NBC SO on Cala. Brimful of interpretative incident and intrepid personality, it has a tingling sense of occasion that helps one overlook some decidedly unconventional tempi, the odd misreading and the conductor's fondness for some inappropriately glamorous, at times positively swooning slides from the otherwise immaculate NBC strings.

BACK TO BRITAIN

Time to return to Blighty, and assess the achievement in this symphony of the composer's most tireless champion, **Sir Adrian Boult**. Of the conductor's two

commercial recordings it's the earlier Decca mono account from 1953 that generates the greater intensity and authentic atmosphere. For all the LPO's occasional unkemptness, the composer (who attended the Kingsway Hall sessions) must have been gladdened by the abundant application on show. Boult never pushes too hard; his direction is sane, clear-sighted and typically humane. Some will find the mood insufficiently confrontational: witness the element of jocularity in the brass's 'oompah' punctuations that Sir Adrian locates in the first half of the finale.

Neither Boult's 1968 stereo remake for EMI with the New Philharmonia nor

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

DATE / ARTISTS

1937 BBC SO / **Vaughn Williams**

1943 NBC SO / **Stokowski**

1950 BBC SO / **Barbirolli**

1953 LPO / **Boult**

1953 New York PO / **Mitropoulos**

1956 New York PO / **Mitropoulos**

1963 BBC SO / **Sargent**

1965 NYPO / **Bernstein**

1968 New Philh Orch / **Boult**

1969 LSO / **Previn**

1973 Boston SO / **C Davis**

1979 RPO / **Berglund**

1987 LSO / **Thomson**

1991 RLPO / **Handley**

1991 Philh Orch / **Slatkin**

1992 BBC SO / **A Davis**

1996 LPO / **Haitink**

1997 LPO / **Norlington**

2001 LSO / **Hickox**

2003 Bournemouth SO / **Daniel**

2010 American SO / **Botstein**

2011 Toronto SO / **Oundjian**

2011 Oregon SO / **Kalmar**

RECORD COMPANY (REVIEW DATE)

Naxos (S) 8 11048, Dutton (S) CDBP9731 (6/95*)

Cala (F) CACD0528 (nla)

Barbirolli Society (M) SJBI064 (3/13)

Decca (S) (G) 473 241-2DC5 (2/03)

Music and Arts (M) (G) CD1214

Sony Classical (S) (G) 88883 73718-2 (1/58*)

BBC Legends (F) BBCL4237-2 (10/08)

Sony Classical (S) (G) (60 discs) 88697 68365-2 (5/69*)

EMI (S) (G) 0874842; (S) (G) 903567-2 (6/68*, 1/01*)

RCA (S) (G) 82876 55708-2 (nla)

BSO Classics (S) (G) (from bso.org)

EMI (S) (G) 2161462 (2/81*, 1/98*); Warner (S) (G) 019255-2 (1/14)

Chandos (F) CHAN8633 (1/89); (M) (G) CHAN9087

CfP (S) 575310-2 (11/92*); (S) (G) 575760-2

RCA (S) (G) 88697 90249-2 (11/93*)

Warner Classics (S) (G) 2564 69848-3 (2/94*)

Warner Classics (S) (G) 984759-2 (5/98*)

Decca (F) 458 658-2DH (10/98)

Chandos (F) CHAN9984 (7/02); (F) (G) CHSA5003

Naxos (S) 8 557276 (12/04); (S) (G) 8 506017

American Symphony Orchestra (S) (G) (from americansymphony.org)

TSO Live (F) TSO0311 (5/12)

Pentatone (F) PTC5186 393

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Sir Adrian Boult, one of Vaughan Williams's most loyal champions, left two recordings of the Fourth

André Previn's LSO recording for RCA from the following year feature in the final running; indeed, the latter turns out to be a clunker – laboured, piecemeal, earthbound and with precious else to redeem it save for its flattering, impressively well-lit sound. Compared to the glib Previn, Boult keeps an infinitely firmer grip on the structural tiller, but, to be honest, the fires have dimmed just a little and the finished product doesn't always set the pulse racing. Nor do the New Philharmonia sound entirely geared up for the task in hand – the slow movement in particular is not always untouched by a suggestion of weary routine.

Happily, I detect altogether greater motivation about the LSO's contribution on two Chandos releases, both of which feature fondly remembered conductors who left us too all too soon. The Fourth always was one of the strongest components in **Bryden Thomson**'s Vaughan Williams symphony cycle, and rehearing it in the present context has merely increased my admiration for a reading of such judicious observation, invigorating spirit and deep-rooted mystery (the double basses' *ad libitum* low D flat on the closing page of the first movement really tells here). Sometimes the capacious church acoustic blunts bite and detail – and in the finale the timpanist enters two crotchets early at four bars after fig 5 (1'06") – but these are minor caveats when the performance overall has plenty to commend it.

On his sumptuously engineered 2001 recording **Richard Hickox** cuts an altogether bluffer figure. Notwithstanding the dapper playing and frequently lustrous body of tone he elicits from the LSO, his energetic conception lacks the satisfying coherence of Thomson's, and the slow movement in

particular is wanting in crackling tension and probing wonder. In the *Scherzo*, the cymbal's three jagged interjections at 0'33", 2'01" and 3'50" are weirdly flattened out to become three plain crotchets. I'd also have welcomed greater light and shade – truly soft sounds are in comparatively short supply.

Only two months separate two recordings featuring the LPO under **Bernard Haitink** and **Sir Roger Norrington** (for EMI and Decca respectively) – and there's no doubt in my mind as to the clear winner! Haitink's account pretty much has everything one could desire: unbounded musicality, entrancing wholeness of vision and purposefulness, complemented in turn by orchestral playing of the very highest quality (indeed, the LPO's response throughout simply blazes with eloquence, trust and conviction). Never forcing the pace nor losing the thread, Haitink lets the music do the talking, and his utterly engrossing interpretation yields enormous pleasure (his handling of the slow movement is a marvel of profound compassion). By contrast, Norrington's traversal is a curiously detached affair – pristine, short-winded and almost fussy in its obsessive attention to detail. He's also not afraid to throw in a few dynamic emendations of his own: his tweaking of the cellos' and double basses' *pizzicato* tread at the start of the slow movement strikes me as mannered in the extreme. The LPO prove stylish protagonists but the overall mood is unhelpfully clinical, an observation which extends to the Decca recording (the low winds extraordinarily transparent, but with double basses grunting a tad too obtrusively for my own liking).

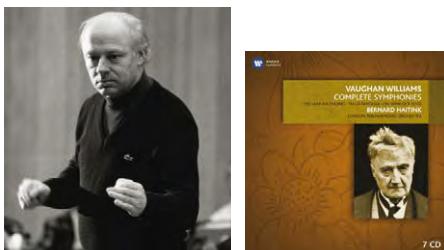
Let me conclude on a high, though, with **Paavo Berglund**'s 1979 version with

the RPO. Set down at Abbey Road Studio No 1 for EMI, his reading possesses an uncompromising thrust, rugged grip and invincibility that irresistibly call to mind the composer's own recording. Only once does the Finn slip up, I feel, and that's at the slow movement's cymbal-topped peak in and around fig 9 (6'08"), where he slams on the brakes for a few bars to awkward effect. That isolated miscalculation aside, this is a worthy memorial to a much-missed conductor of uncommon integrity and selfless dedication – and it sounds as full-bodied as ever in its most recent incarnation (within an excellent Warner Classics Icon box which also includes the eagerly awaited first CD appearance of Berglund's majestic Nielsen Fifth from 1974 with the Bournemouth SO).

THE VERDICT

Berglund easily makes it on to my own shortlist, alongside Handley, Haitink and Oundjian. Among the historic contenders, Vaughan Williams himself, Barbirolli, Boult (1953) and Mitropoulos's two versions also demand to be heard. In matters of interpretation, the composer remains my touchstone, but the shellac sound may prove a stumbling block for first-timers.

So my all-round choice for the shelves? Well, in the end it's a fearsomely close-run thing between Handley and Haitink, but by a whisker the victory palm goes to the Dutchman, whose incomparably lucid, resplendently played and intensely stimulating interpretation never fails to engage both head and heart. **G**



THE TOP CHOICE

LPO / Bernard Haitink

Warner Classics ⑦ 984759-2

Bernard Haitink allows Vaughan Williams's rivetingly cogent symphonic drama to unfold without artifice. There's no hidden agenda here – and absolutely no want of fire either! – just toweringly eloquent music-making, superlatively captured by the microphones. Drawing glorious playing from the LPO, the great Dutch maestro has given us a Fourth for the ages.



Visit the Gramophone page on Spotify to hear excerpts from many of this month's featured recordings

PERFORMANCES & EVENTS

Jerusalem Quartet's Shostakovich cycle ends • Doctor Atomic gets an outing in Strasbourg • BPO's Abbado tribute • Norrington conducts Mozart Mass in Paris • Mahler cycle in Seoul

EVENT OF THE MONTH



Robin Ticciati, Glyndebourne's new music director, opens the 80th summer season with *Der Rosenkavalier*

NEW YORK

Rossini's *La Cenerentola* at the Met, starring Joyce DiDonato (Apr 21 - May 10)

Gramophone Artist of the Year 2010, Joyce DiDonato, and tenor superstar Juan Diego Flórez reunite to perform the roles of Angelina and Don Ramiro in the Met Opera production of Rossini's *La Cenerentola* – following their 2009 DVD release with Liceu Grand Theatre in a Joan Font production for Decca. Conducting the six New York performances, with DiDonato in her New York role debut, is Fabio Luisi, and Cesare Lievi is the director. The performance on May 10 is broadcast live in cinemas around the world through the **Met's Live in HD** programme, with further Encore performances in America on May 14, and in Canada on July 5, 7 and 16.

metoperafamily.org

BOSTON

Maazel closes BSO season with Glinka, Rachmaninov and Berlioz (Apr 24, 25 & 26)

Former New York Philharmonic music director Lorin Maazel closes the Boston Symphony Orchestra's 133rd season with three performances on consecutive days. The concert on April 24 features Mussorgsky's eerily atmospheric *Night on Bare Mountain* and Tchaikovsky's

Symphony No 5, while the April 25 and 26 performances showcase the overture to Glinka's 1842 opera *Ruslan and Ludmila* and Berlioz's ever-popular *Symphonie fantastique*. All three programmes include Rachmaninov's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, performed by young Uzbek-born pianist Behzod Abduraimov – winner of the 2009 London International Piano Competition and an exclusive Decca artist. Those not able to make it to Symphony Hall in person can listen to the final April 26 performance live on **WCRB 99.5 Classical New England** throughout the Greater Boston area and worldwide via online streaming. A further Encore performance can be heard on Monday May 5.

bso.org

LONDON

Jerusalem Quartet conclude Shostakovich Cycle at Wigmore Hall (Apr 30; May 1 & 3)

The Jerusalem Quartet conclude their season-long exploration of Shostakovich's complete string quartets at London's Wigmore Hall over three performances. On April 30 the ensemble perform Nos 7, 8 and 9, followed on May 1 by Nos 10, 11 and 12. On May 3, the cycle comes to an end with Nos 13, 14 and 15. The Jerusalem Quartet, who were nominated

GLYNDEBOURNE

Strauss: *Der Rosenkavalier*, with LPO conducted by Robin Ticciati (May 17 - July 3)

Glyndebourne's 80th-anniversary season opens with Richard Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier*, not seen at the festival since 1982. The fresh staging by Richard Jones is conducted by Glyndebourne's new music director, and features the London Philharmonic Orchestra and the Glyndebourne Chorus. Irish mezzo Tara Erraught makes her role debut as Octavian, while Kate Royal returns in her role debut as the Marschallin, and Teodora Gheorghiu makes her Glyndebourne debut as Sophie. The production is broadcast live in cinemas on June 8 throughout the UK, Ireland and Guernsey. As part of a new partnership with the **Telegraph Media Group**, it will also be streamed on *The Telegraph* website – as one of three full-length festival operas to be streamed online during 2014, including *Don Giovanni* in July and *La traviata* in August.

glyndebourne.com

for Gramophone's 2013 Artist of the Year, are no strangers to Shostakovich, having recorded two discs of the composer's quartets for Harmonia Mundi in 2005 and 2007.

wigmore-hall.org.uk

STRASBOURG

Opéra National du Rhin presents

John Adams's *Doctor Atomic* (May 2-9)

Opéra National du Rhin stages a new production of John Adams's tale of Faustian excess, set against the backdrop of America's Manhattan Project of the Second World War. Starring in four performances staged by Lucinda Childs on May 2, 4, 6 and 9 are baritone Dietrich Henschel as Robert Oppenheimer, Robert Bork as Edward Teller, Marlin Miller as Robert Wilson and Anna Grevelius as Kitty Oppenheimer alongside the Chorus of the Opéra National du Rhin and the Mulhouse Symphony Orchestra conducted by Patrick Davin. International audiences can watch the performance online on May 6, streamed live via **Medici TV**.

operanationaldurhin.eu

DETROIT

Detroit Symphony Orchestra in HD webcasts throughout May (From May 2)

With its newly installed HD cameras (see page 8), the Detroit Symphony Orchestra with music director Leonard Slatkin is playing to a global audience. On May 2, Louis Lortie joins the DSO and Thierry Fischer for Chopin's First Piano Concerto; Berlioz's *Romeo and Juliet* completes the programme. On May 18, Yefim Bronfman plays Beethoven's Third Piano Concerto and Slatkin conducts *Appalachian Spring*. May 22 finds Zuill Bailey playing the Elgar Cello Concerto; Carlos Kalmar also conducts works by Brahms, John Adams and Nielsen (Fourth Symphony). And on May 30, Leonard Slatkin conducts Mahler's Third Symphony.

dso.org

LJUBLJANA

Guitarist Miloš Karadaglić continues tour of Rodrigo's Concierto de Aranjuez (May 7)

Guitarist and *Gramophone* 2011

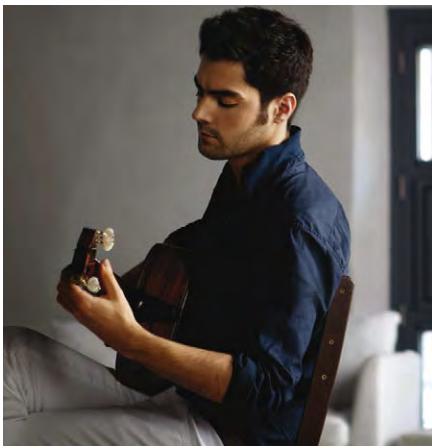
Young Artist of the Year Miloš Karadaglić released his new album 'Aranjuez' in February – his third release for DG, featuring Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez* and works by Falla accompanied by the LPO under Yannick Nézet-Séguin. As part of an extended tour throughout Europe, he performs Rodrigo's concerto with the Cadaqués Orchestra conducted by Jaime Martín at Cankar Hall in Ljubljana, Slovenia, on May 7, and then at the Culture and Convention Centre in Rosenheim, Germany, on May 8, and the Congress Centre in Hanover on May 9, alongside Granados's *Goyescas* Suite orchestrated by Jesús Rueda and Ravel's ballet *Mother Goose*. Later in the month, on May 31, he performs the Rodrigo at the Perth Festival of the Arts as part of a different line-up, this time with the Royal Northern Sinfonia.

milosguitar.com

BERLIN

BPO pays tribute to Abbado in Schubert, Mozart and Bruckner (May 16, 17 & 18)

Claudio Abbado was set to make his annual appearance with the Berlin Philharmonic in these performances before his death on January 20 – following highly successful 80th-birthday performances of Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* with the orchestra in 2013. In tribute to their long-serving and much-loved former principal conductor, the BPO perform the first half of the programme without a conductor, including the incidental music from Schubert's *Rosamunde* and Mozart's Third Violin Concerto with soloist Frank Peter Zimmermann. In the second half of the programme, current principal conductor Sir Simon Rattle takes to the stage to



Karadaglić performs Rodrigo in Slovenia this month

conduct Bruckner's Symphony No 7. On May 17 at 8pm Berlin time, audiences worldwide can watch the performance live online through the **Berlin Philharmonic's Digital Concert Hall**.

berliner-philharmoniker.de

MALMÖ

Ingrid Fliter plays Chopin's Second Piano Concerto with Malmö SO (May 22)

Argentinian pianist and 2006 Gilmore Artist Award-winner Ingrid Fliter joins the Malmö Symphony Orchestra to perform Chopin's Second Piano Concerto, in a season-concluding programme which also features Schubert's Fifth Symphony and Beethoven's Seventh Symphony conducted by the orchestra's music director Marc Soustrot. Fliter recently committed Chopin's First and Second Piano Concertos to disc with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. 'If an artist cannot engage your emotions in this oft-recorded, oft-heard music then they might as well go away and breed chickens,' writes Jeremy Nicholas in *Gramophone's* March 2014 issue. 'Fliter, by whatever magical means, touches the heart.'

mso.se

PARIS

Sir Roger Norrington conducts Mozart Mass in C minor at Notre-Dame (May 22-23)

Paris's iconic Notre-Dame plays host to two performances by the Chamber Orchestra of Paris of Mozart's Mass in C minor. The orchestra has been directed by Thomas Zehetmair since 2012, but conducting these Mozart Mass performances is principal guest conductor Sir Roger Norrington, while the solo roles are sung by soprano Christina Landshamer, mezzo Jennifer Larmore, tenor Pascal Charbonneau and bass Peter Harvey. Paris radio station **Radio Classique** will broadcast the May 22 performance live throughout France. Audiences

worldwide can also listen to the broadcast online.

musique-sacree-notredamedeparis.fr

SEOUL

Myung-Whun Chung conducts Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra in Mahler (May 23)

The Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra and artistic director Myung-Whun Chung continue their Mahler cycle for Deutsche Grammophon with the composer's Fifth Symphony recorded in a live performance at the Seoul Arts Centre on May 23. The orchestra has already recorded Mahler's First, Second and Ninth Symphonies for the label under Chung's direction, following its groundbreaking signing to DG in 2011 (they're the first Asian orchestra to sign to a major international record label). The agreement is for 10 discs, so expect more Mahler performances and recordings to follow.

seoulphil.or.kr

MONTREAL

Olivier Latry and Montreal SO perform Saint-Saëns's Organ Symphony (May 28-29)

The Montreal Symphony Orchestra is joined by renowned organist Olivier Latry for the inauguration of the new organ at Maison Symphonique de Montréal. Not only does Latry perform Saint-Saëns's *Organ Symphony* with the orchestra, conducted by their principal conductor Kent Nagano, but he also takes to the stage to perform the renowned Bach Toccata and Fugue in D minor and Liszt's *Prelude and Fugue on BACH*. The event on May 28 will be streamed online live and free of charge by **Medici TV** – one of three Montreal Symphony Orchestra performances made available on the international streaming platform during the 2013-14 season. Audiences can also access the performance again during the three months following the concert.

osm.ca/en

BRIDGNORTH, UK

Artists including Alina Ibragimova celebrate Haydn in Shropshire (June 3-8)

Just over into June, the Shropshire market town hosts its annual week-long celebration of Haydn: the English Haydn Festival. Artists include the Chiaroscuro String Quartet – led by the superb young virtuoso Alina Ibragimova – in the opening concert, and violinist Simon Standage as leader of the Festival Orchestra. Haydn's music comprises the bulk of the programming, though his works are contextualised alongside those of near contemporaries including Mozart, Gyrowetz and Pleyel.

haydn.org.uk



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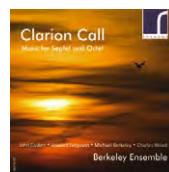
This month I find out whether Sony's hi-res system can take the mystique out of audio beyond CD, and enjoy some smooth desktop audio courtesy of Ruark Audio.

Andrew Everard, Audio Editor

MAY TEST DISCS



This dramatic DSD download of Wagner excerpts from Iván Fischer on Channel Classics has remarkable impact, power and detail.



Featuring several premiere recordings, this Berkeley Ensemble download from Resonus sounds particularly striking in 24-bit/96kHz audio.

The latest reinvention of a top-selling speaker range

The fifth-generation B&W 600 Series could be the best yet – plus more new equipment to tempt us



A new version of a classic speaker range is always big news but the reinvention of the **Bowers & Wilkins** 600 Series is a major event. The redesigned range, which starts with the £350/pr new 686 and goes up to the £1150/pr new 683 floorstanding model, adopts the Double Dome Tweeter from the company's CM10. This tweeter is mounted in B&W's tapered Nautilus tube but the assembly is decoupled from the cabinet using a gel ring, to isolate it from vibrations. The Kevlar mid/bass drivers are improved with the addition of an Anti-Resonance Plug to deliver smoother response and increased sensitivity, while the range-topping 683 uses an FST midrange unit and bass drivers with Dual Layer aluminium diaphragms.

The new 686 is a small bookshelf/standmount design, the £500/pr 685 a larger bookshelf model, and the £800/pr 684 a compact floorstander. In addition, there are two new centre-channel speakers for use in surround systems: the HTM62 is £350 and shares with the new 684 the use of two new 13cm Kevlar mid/bass drivers, while the HTM61 has an FST midrange driver and a pair of 16.5cm Dual Layer bass drivers. All the new models are available in black ash or white finishes.

Also new is the **Acoustic Energy** 1-Series speaker range, designed to keep the sound

signature of the company's 3-Series but in a more affordable form. The speakers use a new 28mm soft-dome tweeter and the latest version of Acoustic Energy's aluminium/ceramic/aluminium sandwich to handle the lower frequencies. The braced heavyweight fibreboard cabinets have front-venting slot ports and the speakers come in a choice of black ash or walnut vinyl wrap.

The entry-level AE 101 standmount speaker at £275/pr combines that 28mm tweeter with an 11cm mid/bass driver, while the £550/pr AE 103 is a floorstanding model, with an extra 11cm bass driver in its own enclosure and a slanted front baffle. The AE 107, which sells for £109, is a centre-channel speaker also using two 11cm mid/bass drivers, and the range is completed with the £349 AE 108 subwoofer. Remote-controlled and designed to perform at its best when used in pairs, the AE 108 is the company's smallest subwoofer to date and uses a 20cm long-throw driver with a 150W amplifier in a 28-litre cabinet.

Ortofon has just launched a five-strong range of moving-coil cartridges, appropriately named Quintet, and including a dedicated mono model designed to handle microgroove records while 'managing the inevitable wear and tear these records have experienced over the years with respect'. The Quintet Mono is £325, while other models

in the range start from £199 for the Quintet Red and go up to the £649 Quintet Black.

Turning to CDs, and the arrival of two new players from leading US high-end manufacturers. The £6395 **McIntosh** MCD550 is an SACD/CD machine using 32-bit/192kHz PCM/DSD conversion, with coaxial, optical and asynchronous USB inputs for external digital sources. It also has both optical and coaxial digital outputs, plus fixed and variable balanced and unbalanced outputs.

The £8050 **Audio Research** CD6 is described as a 'super high-resolution DAC incorporating top-loading CD transport', and as well as its CD playback has two optical, one coaxial and asynchronous USB digital inputs. It has user-selectable upsampling and digital filters, and outputs on RCA phono plus balanced XLRs, plus BNC and AES/EBU digital. It's available now. **G**

1 Bowers & Wilkins reinvents its 600 Series speakers, ranging from £350 to £1150 per pair

2 Acoustic Energy's 1-Series speakers offer the company's sound signature more affordably

3 Ortofon launches five new moving-coil cartridges designed to respect your records

4 McIntosh presents the MCD550, a new high-end SACD/CD player, retailing for £6395

5 Audio Research counters with the CD6 'DAC with transport' – yours for £8050

● REVIEW PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

Sony HAP-Z1ES and TA-A1ES

An unusual approach but a magnificent sound

Music-streaming systems aren't new – neither is high-resolution music. But the Sony approach to the latter is different to that of established players such as Cyrus, Linn and Naim. Yes, the company has a digital-to-analogue converter able to connect to a computer and do the 'Macs and DACs' audio thing, but the mainstay of the new Sony offering is based around local hard-disk storage of music, not streaming.

Ask Sony about network streaming and the answer is 'never say never'; for now the network capability of its flagship HAP-Z1ES high-resolution player is there to suck in music stored on a connected computer and look up stored music on the Gracenote database. This can be in the form of anything from MP3 right the way via PCM or FLAC at up to 24-bit/192kHz to DSD, the technology behind Super Audio CD.

That's another thing about the HAP-Z1ES: it may have a 1TB hard drive, plus a USB socket to allow attachment of extra storage, but there's no optical drive to allow the direct import of CDs. Music must be either downloaded from the internet or 'ripped' using an optical drive on to a computer, where it can then be accessed by the player with the help of a free HAP Transfer application.

So the HAP-Z1ES is a high-resolution player, not a recorder. As well as its network connectivity (either via Ethernet or Wi-Fi), it has audio outputs on both RCA phono and balanced XLRs to match the input choice on the TA-A1ES amplifier, can access internet radio stations and allows control from a smartphone or tablet using Sony's free HDD Remote app.

However, under the player's lid is a range of engineering designed to make the most of its sound, not least of which is the fact that it can be set to upscale all the audio stored on its hard disk to 5.8MHz DSD before it passes through D-to-A conversion. In fact this is the default setting, and is done 'on the fly' during playback, taking advantage of the fact that converting DSD content means a lot less work for a suitable D-to-A converter and the belief that this should yield benefits in sound quality. (The DACs here are designed so that both DSD and PCM files are converted in their native form: there's no fudging DSD through PCM to simplify things.)

There's also a Digital Sound Enhancement Engine, for counteracting deficiencies of lower bit-rate compressed music. Sony's Eric Kingdon says it's particularly effective in tackling the way such compression can truncate the decay of notes, diminishing instrumental character. Beyond that, the player uses twin transformers (one each for the digital and analogue sections) and a development of the company's Frame and Beam chassis, which here adds a further baseplate for greater rigidity and a low centre of gravity. Even the angling of the internal cooling fan was determined by its effect on sound quality!

The TA-A1ES amplifier also has plenty of innovative thinking within. It's a 2x80W design with plenty of power in reserve to increase output as impedance falls, is of a dual-mono design and has four line inputs, one set of speaker outputs and a separate headphone amplifier with an impedance selector. Again built on an FBB chassis and with a hefty power transformer, it uses an amplifier design linking volume to bias



SPECIFICATIONS

SONY HAP-Z1ES

Type Digital Music Player

Price £1999

Formats played DSD (DSF, DSDIFF), LPCM (WAV, AIFF), FLAC, ALAC, ATRAC Advanced Lossless, ATRAC, MP3, AAC, WMA

Outputs Stereo audio on XLR and RCA phono

Other connections USB-A, Ethernet, Wi-Fi, IR remote out to control amplifier

Accessories supplied Remote handset, remote cable, IR transmitter, LAN cable

Options HAP Transfer software, HDD Audio app (both free)

Dimensions (WxHxD) 43x13x39cm

SONY TA-A1ES

Type Stereo amplifier

Price £1999

Power output 2x80W into 8 ohms

Inputs Four line-in on RCA phono, one on XLR balanced inputs

Outputs One pair speaker terminals, headphone (with impedance selector)

Other connections Remote control in

Accessories supplied Remote handset

Dimensions (WxHxD) 43x10.8x36.5cm

sony.co.uk

control, allowing linear operation of the power transistors without excessive heat. In fact, Kingdon explains that for the majority of listeners, the amplifier will effectively be operating in Class A for all their listening.

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The superb quality of the Sony pairing requires the use of top-notch partnering components...

ANTHEM REFERENCE CABLE

To connect the player and amp, it makes sense to use the balanced inputs and outputs for the best quality - The Chord Company's Anthem Reference cable was used for the review.



FOCAL ARIA 926 FLOORSTANDERS

The highly dynamic sound of the Sony combination means similarly expressive speakers are a must: Focal's Aria 926 floorstanders offer a presentation that's both thrilling and substantial.



The volume read-out uses a digital display whose control circuitry and illumination are switched when a level has been set, in order to minimise noise. And, while a remote handset is supplied, a wired link from the HAP-Z1ES allows the amplifier to be controlled by that HDD Remote app.

PERFORMANCE

Installation of both player and amplifier was completely straightforward, and the transfer of content from computer to player was also simple, if time-consuming. You can choose whether to copy everything over or just selected content (by format, for example), and also set the player to 'keep watch' and copy any music you add to your computer. Both units were factory-fresh, so were given a few days' running without any listening. They were connected to my PMC speakers with Chord Signature cables; the connection between the player and amplifier was Chord Anthem Reference, kindly supplied by Chord's technical director, Nigel Finn.

With a wide range of music (both in style and by format) loaded on to the HAP-Z1ES, the Sony duo was ready to show off what it could do. Here's the sum-up: the HAP-Z1ES is a remarkably expressive and involving-sounding player, and the TA-A1ES amplifier is even more breathtaking in its ability to convey all the weight of music while displaying amazing resolution and impact.

This is a truly world-class amplifier, combining silky smoothness and an air of being in complete control with deft punch and real attack when required. That's clear when playing the Iván Fischer/Budapest Festival Orchestra Wagner album from a Channel Classics DSD download: the power and detail in evidence in the *Meistersinger* Overture are simply thrilling, as is the impression of the music being performed live before you. The TA-A1ES's sense of grip on speakers is confidence-inspiring; and while it lacks some of the visual 'bling' common in some high-end amplifiers, it has all the performance to suggest that this is going to become a classic Sony product.

The player is also highly impressive, from the clarity of its display and that of the accompanying app all the way through to its ability to make the most of a wide range of music. With native DSD files it's predictably excellent, the sheer presence with which the

Rachel Podger/Brecon Baroque recording of Bach's Double Violin Concerto – another Channel Classics DSD download – springs from the speakers being a surprise of the very best. As with the Wagner, there's a wonderful sense that live music is being played before you – all rather addictive.

Doing its party trick – upconverting other formats to DSD before they're converted to analogue – the Sony is also intriguing. Without a doubt, music at CD quality sounds smoother and less brittle when it's run through the Sony's DSD Remastering process, but at the same time some of the vitality and excitement of a good high-resolution PCM recording can seem buffed away. Listening to some of the excellent 2L label recordings, which are available in both high-resolution PCM and DSD, it's clear that the DSD recordings sound slightly superior to 24/192 PCM when played 'back to back' on the Sony. However, I found I preferred the PCM version without the DSD Remastering, rather than with it in action. Some experimentation with more obviously rhythm-driven music in 24-bit/88.2kHz FLAC – and this may be only time you'll ever see Daft Punk's 'Get Lucky' being referenced in *Gramophone* – showed the DSD Remastering gave a warmer, bigger bass but at the expense of a slightly thicker, slower-sounding overall presentation. The good news is that this setting can be made from the remote app, meaning it's possible to set whichever option suits your system and ears the best. But there's no such doubt about the (also optional) DSEE processing's effect on low bit-rate content, especially internet radio streams. I've never heard such streams sound better, either with speech or music, than they do through the Sony player.

Sony has taken an alternative path with its foray into high-resolution audio but, on the showing of the HAP-Z1ES player, it's just as viable an approach as network streaming or 'Mac and DAC', and capable of remarkable performance. The TA-A1ES amplifier, meanwhile, is simply a delight, and recommended without reservation to anyone looking in this (admittedly rather rarefied) sector of the integrated amplifier market. Together the two make a decidedly potent combination in the 'serious audio' arena. Welcome back, Sony. **G**

DESIGN NOTES

Minoru Inayama

Designer, HAP-Z1ES

On Italian prog rock, Kleiber in Japan, and avoiding digital confusion



Responsible for the design of the HAP-Z1ES, Minoru Inayama has a string of digital audio patents stretching back to the 1980s to his name, both individually and along with Sony's just-retired chief distinguished engineer, Takashi Kanai.

He counts among his earliest musical experiences an enthusiasm for Italian progressive rock band Le Orme going back to the 1970s, and extending to the last time he heard them live a couple of years ago. Among his most memorable musical experiences, he recalls Carlos Kleiber conducting

the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra in Japan in 1986. The programme was Beethoven's Fourth and Seventh symphonies. 'Kleiber's conducting brought the music to life,' says Inayama.

'It truly was almost a magical concert experience.' Mind you, he also harks back to hearing Italian prog-rock band PFM in concert in Japan in 2002. 'I'd been listening to them for 20 years and finally I could get to listen to their live music. I was really moved by their great songs.'

When designing and tuning new products, he says: 'I'm always trying to listen to a wide variety of music such as classical, jazz, rock and pop, including traditional Japanese music.' And he believes the unique appeal of the new Sony products is their cross-format capabilities. 'There are many HD audio formats and it can be confusing for the customer, so we need to supply products which can play back many different HD formats. In this way they are able to enjoy the relative merits of different formats, in high quality with no problem.'

'We need to supply products that can play back many different HD formats'

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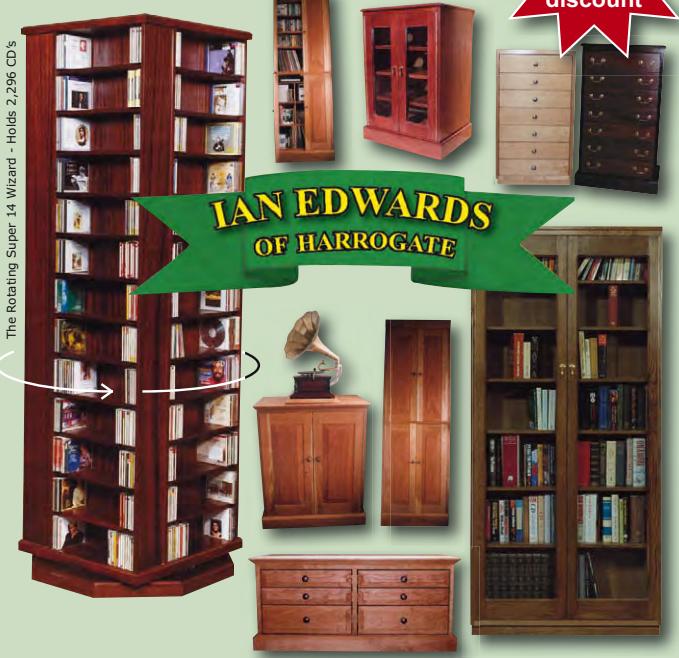
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● REVIEW RUARK MR1

Little speakers with instant appeal

Compact desktop speaker system has a warm, attractive sound



SPECIFICATION RUARK AUDIO MR1

Type Bluetooth speaker system

Price £300

Drive units 20mm soft-dome tweeter, 7.5cm long-throw woofer

Amplification 20W Class A/B

Inputs aptX Bluetooth, line-in (with switchable attenuation) on 3.5mm socket

Outputs Subwoofer on 3.5mm socket

Accessories supplied Mains power supply, remote control

Finishes Walnut veneer, Soft White and Soft Black lacquer

Dimensions (HxWxD) 17x13x13.5cm

ruarkaudio.com

Desktop audio systems and the like have long been the mainstay of the 'Listening Wirelessly' section of the *Gramophone* website but the recent explosion in the availability of such devices shows just how much interest there is in this new form of personal listening. When I first started writing that section,

'It used to take some hunting to find ways of getting better sound from the Gramophone Player - now all that's changed'

it took some hunting to find the answer to a simple question – how to get better sound from the *Gramophone* Player. Now there are solutions at every level, from sub-£100 devices to connect computers and handheld devices to audio systems, through speaker systems all the way up to fairly high-end

separates complete with Bluetooth or Apple AirPlay connectivity.

The MR1 system we have here from Ruark Audio is an all-in-one system, and an elegant solution both technically and in its styling. Selling for £300, it's typical of the company's offering: it's a compact Bluetooth system comprising a pair of powered speakers, using high-quality cabinet construction (hand-crafted in wood), drive-units and electronics, and with controls simplified to a single twist-and-push device atop the 'master' speaker, plus a tiny remote handset. Available in very smart walnut veneer as well as 'soft' black or white lacquer, the speakers have both aptX Bluetooth and a 3.5mm line input, an output for an external subwoofer and even the ability to be used with Ruark's £50 BackPack rechargeable battery pack, should you wish to listen where mains power is unavailable.

The drivers are Ruark's own 20mm soft-dome tweeter and a long-throw 7.5cm woofer tuned with a downward-venting port, each using a neodymium magnet system, while the amplification in the master speaker is a Class AB design, delivering 20W. The master speaker is designated as the right one, with the left speaker connected using a cable supplied. This uses phono sockets, so it would be easy to add a longer cable should the already generous length provided prove insufficient.

PERFORMANCE

Set-up of the MR1 couldn't be much simpler: with the speakers parked on the desk, one press of the master speaker's control powers it up and shows an orange light, indicating the line input is selected. Press again for a couple of seconds, or press the Bluetooth button on the remote, and the MR1 is now 'discoverable' and can be paired with your computer, smartphone, tablet or whatever. Up to eight devices can be paired in this way.

That done, the Ruark has an instantly appealing sound: it's warm and rich, but with good detail and sparkle when playing decent recordings, while at the same time flattering low bit-rate internet radio content. There's no shortage of bass, to the extent that I'd suggest a subwoofer wouldn't be needed unless one was using the MR1 as a main system in a modestly sized room. Used for desktop listening, the low-end is perhaps a little warmer than would be ideal, although this can be corrected using the equaliser settings in any Bluetooth device to which it's connected.

That said, the balance here is infinitely preferable to any thinness or lack of low-end, and there's never any danger of the tonality swamping the midband and treble, even when one listens well off the vertical axis of the tweeters – for example with the speakers on a desk.

By the standards of the very best desktop speakers, the Ruarks are slightly limited – my usual office set-up of an original NaimUniti driving Neat Iotas delivers a more spacious and powerful sound, albeit with a £2500-ish price tag. But let's be realistic: this is an all-in-one solution with a winning sound and superb convenience, not to mention plenty of style, and does all it does for just £300. It's very solidly recommended. **G**

● ESSAY

Hi-fi is worth saving but purist thinking isn't the only answer

Recent developments are yet again trying to attract new generations to the specialist audio industry, says **Andrew Everard**, but doesn't that put the cart before the horse?



A Streaming Made Simple session: Linn shows its streaming range to prospective customers

Two recent events caught my eye. One was the launch of a US-based campaign to Save the Stereo, describing itself as 'a project to lead the next generation of music lovers to high-performance audio'; the other a piece by a generally respected audio journalist suggesting that multichannel audio is the cause of the decline of the hi-fi industry and that we should all ditch surround and get back to good old two-channel.

I have sympathies with both camps, yet I'm not entirely sure I agree with the way either is tackling the perceived problems. In a world where many consumers want to listen to music, enjoy the 'home cinema' experience and even indulge in computer gaming with fine sound and vision, I doubt that driving another wedge into the market is going to do anything more than further isolate the idea of having a good system with which one can just sit down and enjoy music.

As classical music enthusiasts, it may seem we are something of an anachronism in a world where so many consume music on the go, at their desk or even streamed to their mobile phone. While 'they' often

use music as an adjunct to something else – reading, jogging, working out a spreadsheet or whatever – the common image of 'us', the classical music lovers, is still one of book-lined studies, wing-backed armchairs (dreadful for stereo imaging, by the way) and eyes closed in quiet contemplation of a piece of music to the exclusion of all else.

In truth, it's not so 'us and them'.

Correspondence and comments from readers suggest we're as likely to be sitting in front of YouTube with some desktop speakers as lounging in a 'music room', shutting ourselves away in some decent headphones while the rest of the family gets on with 'normal life' around us, or enjoying a concert or opera recording on DVD or Blu-ray – yes, complete with pictures!

So just as I don't see the demands of stereo and surround sound as being completely at odds with each other – the selection of a high-quality AV receiver can ensure good music in stereo and excellent performance when surround sound is required – the audio industry continually sweats and frets over ways of snaring those playing their iPhone through a massive pair of Beats headphones, and introducing them

to a magic world of black boxes, audiophile cables and large speakers. After all, even in most better consumer electronics outlets, uninformed consumers looking for a hi-fi solution seem more likely than not to end up with a Bluetooth speaker whose parts bill places more emphasis on stylish product design and less on audio quality. Yes, there are honourable exceptions, such as the excellent Ruark Audio package reviewed this month, but the market is inescapably awash with brightly coloured and almost inevitably plasticky devices.

But there are signs of hope. In recent meetings with the head of one of the UK's best-known hi-fi names, I was encouraged to hear of a desire to demonstrate to consumers how much more enjoyable everything from music to films to ordinary TV programmes could be if the television was connected to a relatively simple stereo amplifier and speakers rather than using a soundbar or even the TV set's built-in speakers, and for the more adventurous how effective a good surround system could be as a source of stereo music. In other

'Classical music enthusiasts may seem something of an anachronism but in truth it's not so "us and them"'

words, it's about making high-quality audio a part of family life, not something a parent guards jealously for 'special listening.'

This was brought home to me when I attended an event organised by Linn to introduce customers to its streaming systems – one of many occurring worldwide – on one Saturday a month or two back. I joined a father and teenage son duo, and before long the latter was being shown how to stream music from his smartphone to a full-house Linn Exakt system. I was immediately impressed by just how much he seemed to be enjoying the sound it produced.

Not quite my style of music, perhaps, but it did sound good, and I could see how the appeal was beginning to work its magic. I found myself thinking 'Can it really be this simple...?' **G**

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Jazz in Beethoven · Rosenkavalier redux · Summarising Bruckner · Abbado and Giulini

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Beethoven swings

I enjoyed reading Philip Clark's article on 'Classical meets Jazz' (January, page 10), but disagree that the first example of jazz in classical music occurred in the 20th century. For me the first example of jazz in classical music occurs in Beethoven's Piano Sonata No 32, Op 111, in the second movement, third variation. I first heard this music decades ago on an LP performed by Solomon. The movement starts out with a typical slow Beethoven theme, which begins to get a boogie-woogie rhythm in the second variation and then really starts swinging in the third variation. After this wild eruption the music goes back to slow Beethoven. I have never seen, in programme notes to this piece in various other recordings, mention of the jazzy nature of this section, as if it is something embarrassing that is better left unsaid. But people to whom I have played either Solomon's or Pollini's recordings of this movement are just as amazed as I was to hear it.

True, this is music that is written down and not improvised, and so does not meet the full definition of jazz, but it is still remarkable how Beethoven heard in his mind the future, even if he did not pursue it.

Frank Boardman
Athens, GA, US

A remarkable Strauss trio – PS

I'm sorry to contradict your Chicago correspondent ('A remarkable Strauss trio', Letters, April), but at Richard Strauss's



Richard Strauss conducting the LPO in 1947

Letter of the Month

The encore as a gift to the audience

I am grateful for the enlightening article on the art of the encore (March, page 10), and we shall all be grateful to Hilary Hahn for her inspiring contribution to the development of the genre. The article raises some interesting questions about the very nature of the encore. One of them concerns the significance of length. In German the word is 'Zugabe', making it clear that the encore is to be understood as a gift. Reading the article I was reminded of a privileged evening some years ago, in the Beethoven-Saal in Stuttgart's Liederhalle. I was lucky enough to



Hilary Hahn: the violinist has added to the encore repertoire

hear Elisabeth Leonskaja play Beethoven's Op 109 and 110. Then she even gave us the Arietta of Op 111, which I experienced as nothing but a pure gift. But on the way out from

the hall I heard a young man behind me exclaiming loudly that 'Die Zugabe war zu lang!' ('The encore was too long!').

Dag T Andersson
Tromsø, Norway

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funeral, the final trio from *Der Rosenkavalier* was in fact sung by Marianne Schech (the Marschallin), Maud Cunitz (Octavian) and Gerda Sommerschuh (Sophie), all Munich-based singers, with the Bavarian State Opera Orchestra. Solti's skill at maintaining the ensemble on this deeply moving occasion is well documented; each of the singers was overcome and unable to sing, but fortunately never at the same time, so Solti was able to keep the music together.

Apparently, Strauss's widow, Pauline, collapsed when Schech launched the trio, and she had to be supported during the piece.

Jim Brooks
Aberdeen, UK

Reducing Bruckner

In his interesting article (April, page 16), Philip Clark refers to reservations by Anthony Payne and Jonathan Freeman-Attwood concerning the problematics of

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Claudio Abbado: no 'studied saintliness'

making reduced versions of the late Bruckner symphonies. In fact, Stein, Eisler and Rankl did produce such a reduced version of Bruckner's Seventh Symphony – in 1921, for Schoenberg's Society; and two commercial recordings of their version have been released: by the Linos Ensemble (*Capriccio*) and the Thomas Christian Ensemble (MDG). *Howard Jones, via email*

'San Carlo'

In his fulsome appreciation of the late Claudio Abbado (March, page 16), James Jolly writes: 'Not for Abbado the slightly studied saintliness of a Giulini...' In praising Abbado, it wasn't necessary to take a gratuitous jab at Giulini. I attended some of Giulini's rehearsals and also had the opportunity to interview him in Washington DC during an East Coast tour with the Los Angeles Philharmonic in 1982. I found nothing slightly studied about his persona; rather, his saintliness struck me as genuine. More than a quarter-century later, when I interviewed Yannick Nézet-Séguin (who did some coaching with Giulini), he reinforced my impression of the great conductor.

It happens that I ended my 1982 article by observing that 'one of the glories of Naples, the historic opera theater San Carlo, may not be the only San Carlo in the musical firmament'.

*Stephen Cera
Toronto, Canada*

James Jolly writes: I certainly didn't wish to denigrate Giulini. As I say on page 88 of this issue, he gave two of the greatest performances I've ever heard; but late in his life, particularly at the helm of the Philharmonia, his music-making took on an aura, often in tandem with amazingly slow tempi, that somehow felt rather self-consciously 'saintly' (to use that word again). Abbado never fell into that trap.

OBITUARY

The Chicago Symphony Orchestra's principal oboe

RAY STILL

Oboist

Born March 12, 1920

Died March 12, 2014

The oboist Ray Still died on his 94th birthday in March. Best known as the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's principal, Still played in a number of other major US ensembles. Born in Elwood, Indiana, Still started playing the clarinet aged 14, but on hearing the LA Philharmonic's principal oboe Henri de Busscher he switched to the oboe four years later. His first teacher was de Busscher's LA Phil colleague, Philip Memoli.

After the war he went to Juilliard, where he studied with Bruno Labate and then privately with Robert Bloom, Toscanini's oboist in the NBC Symphony Orchestra. In style, Still's sound came from the European traditional rather than the American oboe school – and European critics often responded to his 'vocal' style of playing. He held orchestral positions in the Kansas City Philharmonic, the Buffalo PO, the Baltimore SO and finally the Chicago SO, where he played from 1953 to 1993 under, chronologically, Fritz Reiner (who hired him), Jean Martinon (who fired him; although, following lengthy arbitration, he was reinstated), Sir Georg Solti and Daniel Barenboim. He also taught: at Peabody Institute in Baltimore, at Roosevelt University in Chicago and at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois.

His playing graces many orchestral recordings, and as a soloist he can be heard (among numerous discs) in the Strauss and Bach concertos (Virgin Classics), the Mozart Concerto (DG), Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto No 2* and the 'Wedding' Cantata (RCA), and oboe quintets by Mozart, Vanhal, JC Bach and Stamitz (EMI).



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Paul Mason

Channel 4 News's culture and digital editor on his past life as a composer and music teacher, and exchanging atonal music for Wagner

My maternal grandad was a 1930s dance-band clarinettist, and my dad's family were brass-band musicians. From early on, though, my parents were keen for me not to be musical – they had higher aspirations for me. But I went to a grammar school that specialised in brass playing and became a trombonist, like my dad. At 16, I had lessons with Hallé Orchestra principal trombonist Dudley Bright. Then I went to Sheffield University to study music, and that's when the complications started. I realised that although I loved music, I had a huge passion for other things, so I ended up doing a dual music and politics degree.

After that I trained to be a music teacher, then got two years into my PhD on the Second Viennese School before I ran out of money and lost my long-held interest in atonalism (when I was 16, an atonal piece I'd composed had been performed at the Huddersfield Festival). I became totally engaged with late Romanticism instead. Around this time I was music assistant on the English and Drama course at Loughborough University, where I mainly ran the choir. Our 'Come and Sing' *Messiah* was possibly the most catastrophic version ever – I was a fan of Pinnock's really fast account, and the only musicians who could keep up had taken performance-enhancement stimulants.

I continued composing for a while, including for a children's musical at Leicester's Phoenix Theatre; but my last forays in composition were in the late 1980s. I'd written about a third of an opera based on the 1946 movie *Gilda*, but it was either rubbish or unappreciated. It didn't help that I got a fax from Columbia Pictures telling me to stop writing it. After that, I decided that I wanted to enjoy music just by listening to it.

My listening habits have been technologically determined. In the age of vinyl it was all about what you could afford and find in a small town. The age of CDs freed us up – in the late '80s and early '90s, music shops filled up with multiple recordings of amazing quality. I've now imported my entire CD collection into iTunes. I'm always zipping around on planes, but as long as I've got the last act of *Parsifal* to listen to I'm happy. I listen to music all the time, but never just in the background. If I were told I could only keep a few of my CDs, the music I'd choose would be largely vocal and have a social context – *Messiah*, the Passions, motets... Once you understand what the forms meant in the composer's time, you can mine them for emotional relevance now.

I'm an incurable late Romantic, and since becoming a TV journalist I've had some amazing one-off gigs that have allowed me to unleash this passion. When I wrote my two-part series on Wagner for Radio 4 last year, I got so worried about whether I was getting it right



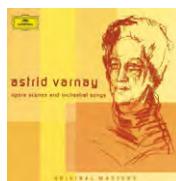
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In almost my favourite piece of music, Wagner threw aside his crazier ideas and was being true to himself



that I locked myself in a hotel room for three days and listened to Solti's *Tristan* over and over.

I regularly go to the opera and am hugely impressed by the rising quality of singers internationally; in Pappano's *Parsifal* there wasn't anyone on stage who didn't have great ability to simultaneously act and sing and convey a narrative. In the '80s I went to famous houses where stars flopped around and didn't even deliver vocally. And if, as one blog said about *Parsifal*, Pappano did 'conduct Wagner like Verdi', so what? Maybe Wagner had heard Verdi. I want to hear relevant – and new.

The download revolution has opened up new worlds. Without fear of prejudice, I can download something by someone I have a vague instinct I might enjoy. I'm not a major fan of crossover, but when it comes to the Kronos Quartet I can't think of a CD by them that I don't like. I love the idea of being able to cross-fertilise your imagination, and downloading makes that possible. The online revolution is not so much about the availability of music as it is about the ability to investigate. We're no longer trapped in one place. **⑥** Paul Mason's book '*Why It's Still Kicking Off Everywhere: The New Global Revolutions*' is published by Verso



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